■ BUSINESS / B1

Japan firm plans P5-B coco facility in RP; 600,000-ha needed

■ METRO / A23

74-year-old woman caught with P5M worth of suspected Ecstasy tablets at Naia

■ NEWS / A3

Cops harass legit STL operators, complains PCSO

■ WORLD / A26

Bush orders National Guard to US-Mexico border to stop flow of illegal immigrants

'Da Vinci Code' for adults only, says film review body

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Entertainment

LEONARDO DA VINCI HIMSELF WOULD'VE BEEN shocked.

A three-member committee of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) gave an R-18 rating to the controversial Hollywood film "The Da Vinci Code," which

DA VINCI/ A21

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Wednesday, May 17, 2006 ★★ 8 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 158 P18 website: www.inq7.net

No environmental clearance for ecopark, lawmaker says

By Philip C. Tubeza

LOOK WHO'S TALKING.

Trying to turn the tables on critics of the controversial housing project at the La Mesa watershed area, Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman yesterday ac-

NO ENVIRONMENTAL/ A21

NAGKA-
BUKUHAN
NA!

2 new slays for task force

Journalist shot dead in ambush

By Nancy Carvajal
Metro

REPORTER ALBERT ORSOLINO often travelled with a companion. Yesterday, driving his Toyota Corolla on his way to work, he was alone. That was when the gunmen struck.

The 45-year-old reporter for the tabloid Saksi, who covered Malacañang, became the latest in the growing list of journalists murdered since 1986 when two men on a motorcycle shot and killed him near a gas station along C-4 Road in Kaunlaran Village, Caloocan City.

JOURNALIST/ A8

RP joins 1st ever int'l tsunami drill

STO. DOMINGO, ALBAY—Although the Philippines escaped the deadly 2004 tsunami that ravaged its neighbors, the country should brace for killer waves because it lies in a geologically dangerous region and has a recent history of tsunami devastation, officials said yesterday.

The Philippines is among more than two dozen countries joining an unprecedented drill on Wednesday to test a tsunami warning system in the Pacific Ocean. A Pacific warning system has been in place since 1965, but a full ocean-wide exercise has never taken place.

RP JOINS/ A10

RAFFY LERMA

YET ANOTHER JOURNALIST WRITES 30: Alissa Orsolino, wife of tabloid photojournalist Albert Orsolino, is consoled by a friend after viewing the remains of her husband who was ambushed near the boundary of Malabon and Caloocan by two men on Tuesday morning.

Senate, House OK dialogue on Cha-cha

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday warned lawmakers she would press ahead with Charter change even if it invited controversy. She persuaded the two chambers of Congress to hold a dialogue on her moves to adopt the parliamentary system.

Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, and his House of Representatives counterpart, Rep. Constantino Jaraula, were tasked with opening discussions on the President's move to amend the 1987 Constitution.

The agreement to hold a dialogue was reached during the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Committee (Ledac) that Ms Arroyo convened yesterday to discuss pending priority measures with nine session days left before Congress adjourns sine die next month.

Ms Arroyo set the tone of the Ledac meeting attended by Senate President Franklin Drilon, who went to Malacañang for the first time after he broke away from the President in July last year and called for her resignation over allegations she stole the 2004 presidential election.

"The time is now and I must press this even if it invites controversy because I am aware that we are a gathering of statespersons despite our disagreements," Ms Arroyo said in remarks to open the meeting. "We can only mold consensus from challenge and in the marketplace of ideas."

The administration is pressing ahead with Charter change on two fronts.

It has initiated a signature campaign under the "people's initiative" mode of amending the Constitution, posing a single question on whether Filipinos agree to do away with the Senate, adopt a unicameral legislature and approve unspecified transitory provisions that will pave the way for the adoption of the parliamentary system.

Without an enabling law to support the people's initiative

SENATE/ A21

5th activist leader killed in a week's time

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN NICOLAS, PANGASINAN—Again, the assassins were on a motorcycle. Again, there was no escaping their deadly fire.

At 10:30 a.m. yesterday, peasant leader Jose Doton, 62, and his brother Cancio, 57, were on a motorcycle on their way home when two other men riding tandem on a red Honda motorcycle fired at them at close range.

Doton, secretary general of the leftist Bagong Alyansang Makabayan, died from bullet wounds in the head and chest—the 124th militant leader assassinated under the Arroyo presidency and the fifth activist murdered this week.

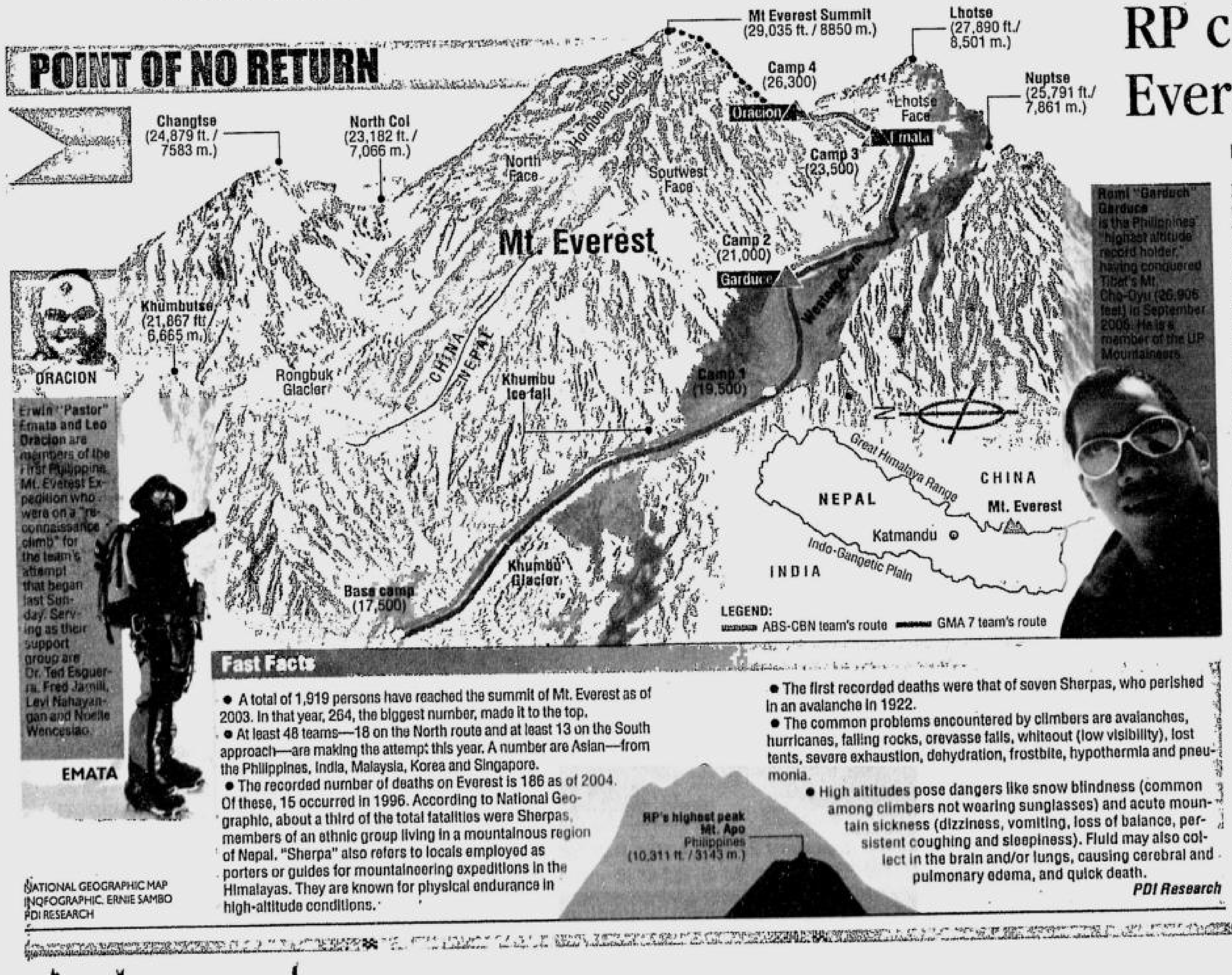
His brother, who was driving the motorcycle, took two bullets in the back and was in critical condition.

The attack occurred a day after the Philippine National Police Task Force Usig vowed to solve the wave of killings of leftwing militants and journalists around the country.

Some 170 km south of where the Dotons were ambushed and at roughly the same time, two other gunmen were on a similarly deadly mission. Also riding on a motorcycle, they shot and killed

2 NEW/ A8

POINT OF NO RETURN



Romi "Garduch" Garduce is the Philippines' "highest altitude record holder," having conquered Tibet's Mt. Cho-Oyu (26,906 feet) in September 2005. He is a member of the UP Mountaineers.

Erwin "Pastor" Emata and Leo Oracion are members of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition who were on a "reconnaissance climb" for the team's attempt that began last Sunday. Serving as their support group are Dr. Ted Esguerra, Fred Jamili, Levi Nahayangan and Noelle Wenceslao.

Fast Facts

- A total of 1,919 persons have reached the summit of Mt. Everest as of 2003. In that year, 264, the biggest number, made it to the top.
- At least 48 teams—18 on the North route and at least 13 on the South approach—are making the attempt this year. A number are Asian—from the Philippines, India, Malaysia, Korea and Singapore.
- The recorded number of deaths on Everest is 186 as of 2004. Of these, 15 occurred in 1996. According to National Geographic, about a third of the total fatalities were Sherpas, members of an ethnic group living in a mountainous region of Nepal. "Sherpa" also refers to locals employed as porters or guides for mountaineering expeditions in the Himalayas. They are known for physical endurance in high-altitude conditions.
- The first recorded deaths were that of seven Sherpas, who perished in an avalanche in 1922.
- The common problems encountered by climbers are avalanches, hurricanes, falling rocks, crevasse falls, whiteout (low visibility), lost tents, severe exhaustion, dehydration, frostbite, hypothermia and pneumonia.
- High altitudes pose dangers like snow blindness (common among climbers not wearing sunglasses) and acute mountain sickness (dizziness, vomiting, loss of balance, persistent coughing and sleepiness). Fluid may also collect in the brain and/or lungs, causing cerebral and pulmonary edema, and quick death.

PDI Research

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAP
INQFOGRAPHIC: ERNIE SAMBO
PDI RESEARCH

RP climbers near Everest summit

By Alcuin Papa

IF THE "MOUNTAIN GODS" ALLOW IT AND the weather cooperates, the Philippine flag will be planted today or tomorrow on the peak of Mt. Everest, the tallest mountain in the world.

Two members of the First Philippine Mt. Everest Expedition (FPMEE), Leo Oracion and Erwin "Pastor" Emata, set out from the Everest Base Camp (5,400 meters or 17,700 feet) last weekend.

Hopes are high that Oracion or Emata may be able to reach the summit in the next two days, FPMEE team leader Regie Pablo told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Another climber, Romi Garduce, has also embarked on his own quest to get to the peak

RP CLIMBERS/ A10

Lea's daughter born in RP

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Entertainment

SINGER-ACTRESS LEA SALONGA, THE Tony-winning star of "Miss Saigon," gave birth to a girl at noon yesterday—three days before her due date.

Lea, who turned 35 in February, made certain that she would give birth in the Philippines. But the family requested the

LEA'S/ A21

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Northern and Western Luzon and Western Visayas will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms. SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/05/16/06

Second FRONTPAGE

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Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Cloudy with Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Junk raps, Batasan 5 ask court

By Tarra V. Quismundo

THE "BATASAN 5" YESTERDAY ASKED A Makati court to dismiss the rebellion charges the Department of Justice (DOJ) filed against them last week, saying they were a revision of the same charges a judge threw out earlier.

Party-list Representatives Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna, Rafael Mariano of Anakpawis and Liza Maza of Gabriela asked Judge Reinato Quilala of Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 57 to dismiss the new charges filed against them and 41 others last Friday.

"[It is] fatally infirm because it is a rehash or a substantive restatement of the amended information that was earlier rejected by Branch 137 as violative, among other reasons, of the due process rights of the accused," said the motion filed by the lawmakers' counsel, Romeo Capulong.

'Insufficient evidence'

The five said the prosecution's evidence was "either utterly lacking or insufficient to establish probable cause."

The latest rebellion charges were filed one week after Judge Jenny Lind Aldecoa-Delorino of Makati RTC Branch 137 refused to include the five and 41 others in the rebellion case filed by the DOJ against Anakpawis Rep. Crispin Beltran and 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan in connection with the attempted coup on Feb. 24.

Delorino had ruled the DOJ's amended information to include the 46 could not supplant the case against Beltran and San Juan as it hypothesized a leftist-rightist conspiracy to topple the government going all the way back to 1968, when the Communist Party of the Philippines was established.

New charges

The DOJ then filed new charges against the 46. Like the case against Beltran and San Juan, the charges alleged a conspiracy between rebel soldiers and communist forces, using the Batasan 5 as legal fronts, to stage a series of uprisings against the government beginning on Feb. 24 and culminating on May 1.

In their motion, the lawmakers also cited the DOJ's breach of court procedures, saying the prosecutors failed to personally certify its many witnesses, contrary to law.

"On its face, the information suffers fatal defects and should be dismissed outright for failure to comply with the mandatory requirements of [the rules on criminal procedure]... On its face the information is null and void for failure to comply with the rules," the Batasan 5 said.

MAGDALO TRIAL

Another witness links Gringo, but...

HANDCUFFED, Lt. Lawrence San Juan arrives at the Makati City court. REM ZAMORA

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A NAVY LIEUTENANT TESTIFIED yesterday that former Sen. Gregorio 'Gringo' Honasan spoke to restive junior officers in at least two meetings leading up to the failed Oakwood mutiny in 2003 but said there was no discussion of violence on how to implement the former military-rebel-turned-senator's "National Recovery Program."

Lt. Nerelito Martinez, a helicopter pilot and flight instructor based in Sangley Point, Cavite, said he was invited to the meetings some time in February and March 2003 by Navy Lt. Manuel Cabochan, one of the defendants, who said Honasan would discuss his action plan to address such problems as slow economy, poverty, peace and order, high population growth and corruption.

But unlike two earlier witnesses who said violence was part of the plan to topple the government which Honasan discussed with the junior officers in a subsequent meeting in June, Martinez said Honasan ruled out the use of violence during the two meetings he attended.

"He asked the attendees if we have read the program and if we have any comment about it. So we asked if it would involve violence. He said there is no violence involved, and that this is only a program [offering] alternative solutions to our problems which can be implemented in 5, 10, 50, or even 100 years," said Martinez.

"I was comforted by his reply, because he told the attendees that there would be no violence," Martinez added. "He even joked, 'I can't engage in another coup d'etat or my wife will surely kill me'.... The attendees all laughed."

Martinez was the 18th witness presented by the prosecution at the Makati trial of 31 junior military officers accused of coup d'etat for their involvement in the short-lived July 27 Oakwood mutiny in Makati.

His testimony contrasted with those of Marine Capt. Pedrito Dulanas and Army Capt. Manuel Darius Resuello who told the court earlier that the use of violence in toppling the government was discussed during a June 4, 2003 meeting between Honasan and junior officers.

The prosecution said the apparent discrepancy in the testimonies showed how Honasan and the other alleged mutiny leaders used deceit in their recruitment as proved by the change in tenor at the meeting attended by Dulanas and Resuello three months later.

But the defense had a different take, saying Martinez's statements were in its favor.

"The witness just told the truth," defense lawyer Theodore Te Roel told reporters. "There was no talk of violence, of a takeover. We should accept the witness' statement at face value. I think the prosecution added it's own conclusion on what their witness had said."

Martinez said he was conducting aerial reconnaisance photography over Caticlan in Aklan at the time of the failed mutiny. After the takeover, he was detained by the military for two weeks as his name appeared on files stored in diskettes found in Oakwood after the mutiny. Fadullon said the files contained a list of recruits for the takeover.

Honasan and six others were named as defendants in the same case last February all but one of them are at large and have not been arraigned.

Shun DOJ advice, sychophants, GMA told

By Philip C. Tubeza

SAYING PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO needed independent-minded legal advisers not sycophants, an administration congressman yesterday urged Malacañang not to rely too much on the Department of Justice which had taken the "path of legal extremism and political rigidity."

Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco, chair of the House committee on foreign affairs, also said the rebellion charges against the "Batasan 5" should be dropped since they were straining the already tense relations between Congress and the Palace.

"These are vintage charges and reminiscent of Marcosian thinking," said Cuenco in a statement, referring to the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

"I cannot understand at all the DOJ's relentless pursuit of the Batasan 5. Would its actions foster unity in government? Would the same engender solidarity and improvement in governance? I see not even an iota of gain or benefit from this legal adventurism," he said.

The Batasan 5—five leftist members of Congress who escaped arrest after a court refused to charge them with rebellion—have been charged anew by the DOJ in connection with the aborted coup against the administration last Feb. 24.

Cuenco said the House will "always be expected to grant its protective shield to the embattled legislators and Speaker [Jose] de Venecia [could] always be prodded to play Big Brother."

De Venecia had given the Batasan 5 sanctuary in the House until a Makati court ruled against including them in the rebellion case the government had filed against another party-list member of Congress, Rep. Crispin Beltran, and rebel soldier 1st Lt. Lawrence San Juan.

"(Pursuing the case would add) undue strain to the already tense relations between the legislature and the executive branch," Cuenco said.

Cuenco urged Malacañang to rely more on Solicitor General Antonio Nachura and legal luminaries in the House instead of the DOJ, saying this would prevent "another serious loss in its legal battles and policy advocacies such as what happened in the cases of EO 464, Proclamation 1017 and (the calibrated preemptive response policy against street protests)."

The Supreme Court recently ruled against the Palace on several provisions of Executive Order No. 464, which barred government officials from attending congressional inquiries; Presidential Proclamation No. 1017, which placed the country under a state of emergency, and the CPR, which banned street protests.

"Malacañang badly needs men and women with legal expertise who can boldly tell the President that a legal standpoint is wrong and who can call a spade... a spade," Cuenco said.

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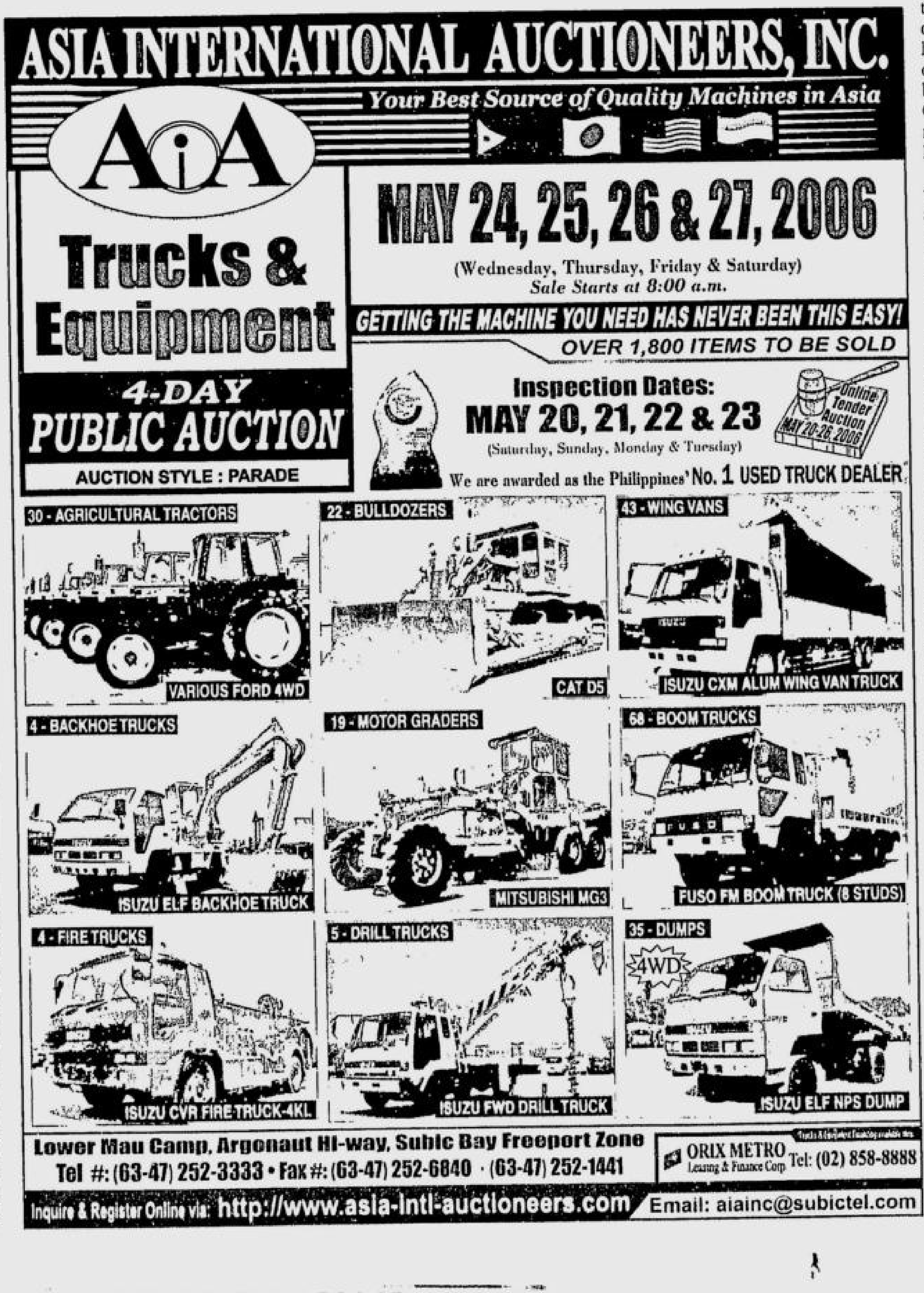

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Cops harassing legit STL operators, PCSO chief complains

By Norman Bordadora

THE PHILIPPINE CHARITY Sweepstakes Office yesterday said its small town lottery operations are being hampered by policemen protecting illegal "jueteng" operations.

PCSO chair Sergio Valencia said in a news conference that his office has received reports that STL operators are being harassed by police officers protecting jueteng to discourage legal competition to the illegal numbers game.

Valencia didn't name names but said that the policemen involved may be slapped with administrative and criminal charges in Quezon and Bataan.

"Initial reports submitted to our police identify several policemen in partnership with local gambling lords as those responsible for the resurgence of jueteng," Valencia said.

Valencia said that the allegedly unscrupulous policemen have resorted to the harassment of STL operators and their legitimate employees in a bid to discourage them from operating in the provinces.

The PCSO reported that it has already remitted more than P2 million to the local police forces in the areas where STL has operated since mid-February.

"We will not hesitate to unmask these people and file criminal as well as administrative charges against them," Valencia said.

The STL has so far been launched in seven areas for test runs. These areas include Quezon, Bataan, Angeles City in Pampanga, Quezon City, Occidental Mindoro, Pampanga, Laguna and Bulacan.

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1. Jenkins AL, *et al.* Depression of the glycemic index by high levels of B-glucan fiber in two functional foods tested in type 2 diabetes *Europ J Clin Nut* 2002; 56: 622-28. 2. Evidence-based nutritional approaches to the treatment and prevention of diabetes mellitus. Diabetes and Nutrition Study Group (DNSG) of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), *Nutr Metab Cardiovasc Dis* 2003; 14: 373-394. 3. Position Statement. American Diabetes Association, *Diabetes Care* 2002; (1): 25 202-12. NEST0035. 4. Lavin JH, Read NW: The effect on hunger and satiety of slowing the absorption of glucose : relationship with gastric emptying and postprandial blood glucose and insulin responses. *Appetite* 25, 89-96, 1995. 5. Howarth NC, *et al.* Dietary fibre and weight regulation. *Nutr Rev* 2001; 59(5): 129-139.

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Gov't starts valuation of Hacienda Luisita

By Blanche S. Rivera

HOW MUCH IS HACIENDA LUISITA worth?

A government team is to start an ocular inspection of the sugar estate today to determine the value of the hacienda, which the Arroyo administration has decided to parcel out to the farm's workers.

Agrarian Reform Undersecretary Narciso Nieto Jr. estimated that only around 4,600 hectares of the 4,915-ha estate owned by the family of former President Corazon Aquino would be distributed to the farm hands after subtracting the area occupied by roads, canals and houses.

Nieto made the announcement of the valuation during meetings with the two groups of Luisita workers who came to the DAR central office yesterday.

This early, the DAR has appealed to the would-be beneficiaries batting for individual land titles not to give up their land in exchange for quick cash.

"Don't sell them to the rich (landowners) and then later on, come to us for another agrarian reform," Nieto said, addressing members of the Farm Workers' Agrarian Reform Movement-Luisita (FARM).

He said the government was taking great pains to acquire the land, which remained under the control of the Cojuangcos for 16 years through a stock distribution option under the Land Reform Law. The estate's tenants have been demanding that the hacienda be parceled out to them under the government's land reform program for the past 47 years.

On DAR's recommendation, the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council revoked last year the stock scheme in effect in Luisita, paving the way for the distribution of the sugar land to its farm workers. The stock scheme had made the farmers part owners of the estate since 1989.

A team composed of representatives from the Land Bank of the Philippines, the DAR and the Department of Agriculture would visit the 10 barangays that comprise Luisita from May 17 to 19.

The Alyansa ng mga Manggagawang Bukid ng Asyenda Luisita (AMBALA) said the Land Bank should peg the value of Hacienda Luisita to its value in 1989 when the stock distribution scheme was implemented under a law enacted during the administration of President Aquino.

"The land is not free; farmers will pay for it, and they cannot afford to pay so much for the hacienda, which some say can even fetch up to P2 million per hectare," AMBALA legal counsel Jobert Pahilga said.

The Hacienda Luisita Inc., manager of the estate, had sent feelers that it wanted P1 million per hectare as compensation for the hacienda, the same amount for which it sold 77 hectares of the hacienda to the Bases Conversion Development Authority for an expressway.

Nieto had said earlier that sugar lands covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program usually fetch between P100,000 and P300,000 per hectare.

When the Land Bank comes up with its valuation, it will be submitted to the landowner for approval.

"If the landowner rejects the value, then it becomes a question of valuation, not coverage. This will go to the DAR Adjudication Board, but the coverage will proceed despite the case," Nieto said.

The DAR stands pat on its decision to issue a collective certificate of land ownership to the Luisita farm workers by next month to ensure that the titles would be immediately transferred from the landowner.

"This is a continuing process. We will proceed with awarding individual titles if that is what the majority (of farmers) still want," he said.

FARM members yesterday submitted a petition signed by 1,103 farm workers seeking individual titles for its members when the collective title is issued.

With Kenneth M. del Rosario

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VICTORIAS MILLING COMPANY, INC., Victorias City, Negros Occidental wishes to invite interested bidders/contractors to pre-qualify and to bid for the complete repair of **one (1) unit 5KV Manually-operated Transfer Switch (MTS)** for the **Medium-Voltage Compound Feeder** based on the Scope of Work covered by Electrical Operations **JR No. 4740B** dated **April 5, 2006.**

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(Sgd.) **TERESITA V. ILAGAN**
Chairperson, Senior Bidding Committee

(PDI - May 17, 2006)

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Wednesday, May 17, 2006
5th Week of Easter

1st Reading: Acts 15:1-6
Gospel: John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine and my Father is the vinegrower. If any of my branches doesn't bear fruit, he breaks it off; and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, that it may bear even more fruit.

"You are already made clean by the word I have spoken to you; live in me as I live in you. The branch cannot bear fruit by itself but has to remain part of the vine; so neither can you if you don't remain in me.

"I am the vine and you are the branches. As long as you remain in me and I in you, you bear much fruit; but apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not remain in me is thrown away as they do with branches and they wither. Then they are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned.

"If you remain in me and my words in you, you may ask whatever you want and it will be given to you. My Father is glorified when you bear much fruit: it is then that you become my disciples."

Commentary

The issue of becoming Jewish according to the old law comes up as the preaching to the Gentiles continues. So Paul and Barnabas return to the church to tell the elders the story of their travels and the conversions, thus bringing joy to all. But they also recount that those who were preaching Judaism as a requisite were causing dissension. The Church decides to convene and look into the matter. Jesus speaks of the vine and the need for pruning and cleaning to increase the yield. It is through living in Jesus that the vine and the branches find their source. Apart from Jesus there is no life, nothing. Concentration on Jesus, not on any other traditions, is what is primary.

Corrections

IN THE MAY 9 ISSUE, A STORY ON PAGE A2—"IS PALACE PUNishing Karina et al.?"—misstated the name of the government body that oversees the top tiers of the country's bureaucracy. The government body is the Career Executive Service Board (CESB)—not the Career Service Executive Board (CSEB). The same mistake appeared in the May 11 editorial, "Uncivil War."

* * *

IN THE MAY 9 ISSUE, A LETTER TO THE EDITOR ON PAGE A12—"Why ethanol first, when we already are overflowing with cocodiesel?"—misstated the motto of Sustainable Rural Enterprise, a nongovernment organization. The NGO's motto is "Always Use Your Coconut!"—not "Always List Your Coconut!"

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of fairness or objectivity may be sent to Lorna Kalaw Tirol, readers' advocate, e-mail address: readersadvocate@inquirer.com. ph or fax Nos. 897-47-93/94, Attn: Readers Advocate. Her phone number is 897-8808 Local 342.

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Senators see tough battle over budget

By TJ Burgunio

SENATORS, WHO HAD VOWED TO APPROVE the P1.053-trillion proposed budget for 2006 in three weeks, see a fierce debate, perhaps even an impasse, at the bicameral conference because they plan to overhaul the bill passed by the House of Representatives.

"I'm worried that there will be a huge difference between what the Senate will pass and what the House has approved. We can't say if there will be an agreement in the bicameral conference," Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. said yesterday.

"Our plan is to set the priorities right in this budget passed by the House. We will prioritize the funds, and there will be major amendments," he added.

Villar, chair of the Senate committee on finance, said that senators intended to scrutinize "lump sum appropriations" in the budget and transfer them to sectors that badly need funds, such as education and health.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. had said opposition senators planned to closely examine funds he branded as "partisan in nature," including the P5-billion Kilos Asenso Support Fund and the P3-billion Kalayaan Barangay Program Fund. Both are earmarked for local government units.

The funds should be diverted to the Department of Science and Technology, one of the agencies getting the least priority in budget allocation but which could help the government develop technology for tapping alternative sources of energy, he said.

Working overtime

Villar said he had asked the senators to submit their proposed amendments to the House budget measure, saying these would be incorporated in his committee's report to be presented on the floor next week.

"This recommendation will take into consideration all of the opinions and recommendations of the senators," he said.

The Senate expects to pass the measure on May 26 and forthwith hold the bicameral conference with congressmen.

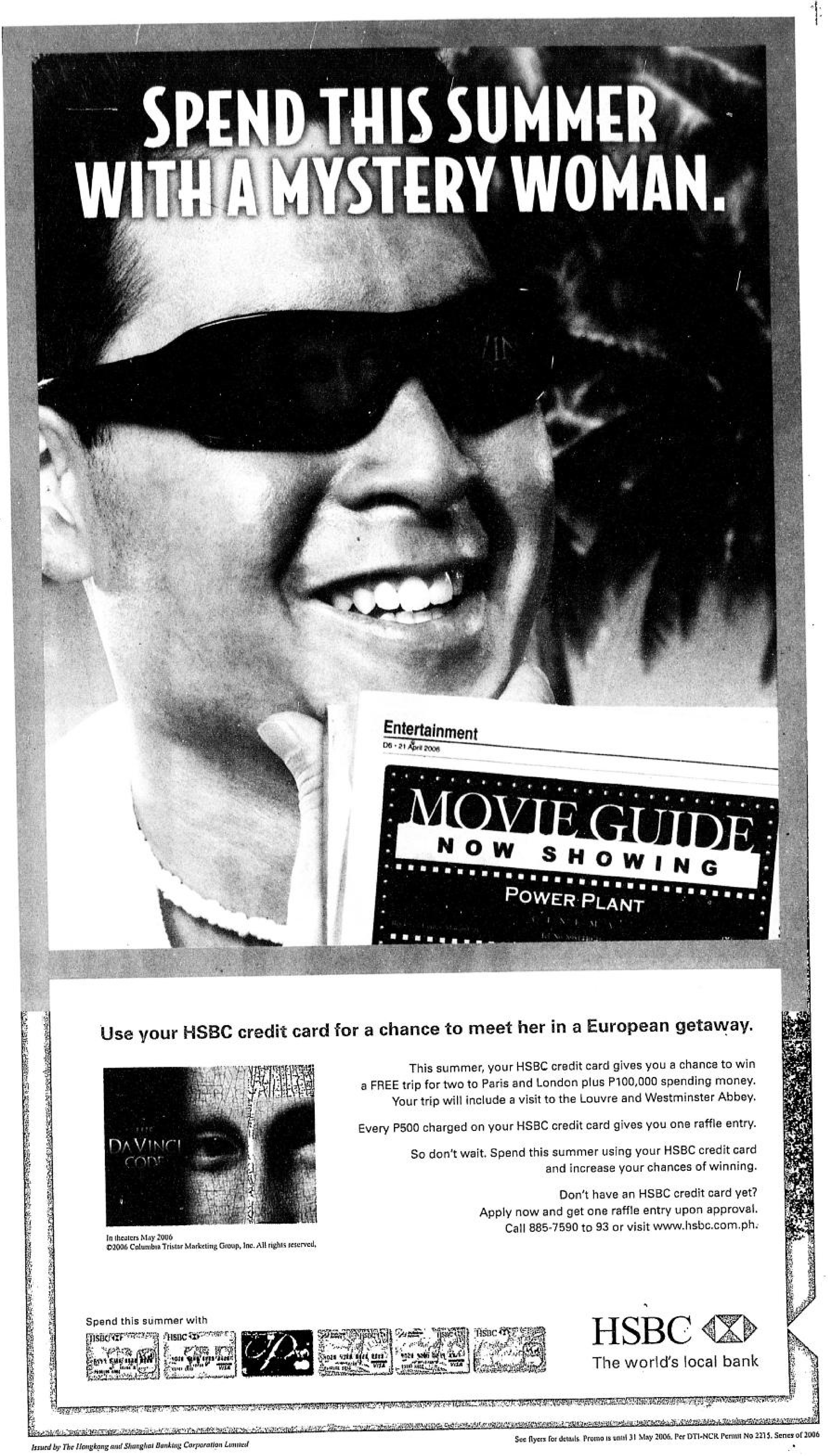
After a caucus Monday afternoon, the senators agreed to work overtime and hold sessions five days a week, instead of the regular three days, to hasten the passage of the budget and six other priority bills.

After months of delay, the House approved a P1.04-trillion budget on April 4, a day before Congress took a break for the Holy Week. The budget is normally transmitted to the Senate by mid-November and passed at year's end.

Other than the budget measure, administration Sen. Joker Arroyo doubted the Senate would be able to approve the priority bills during its marathon sessions until the second week of June.

"It's very ambitious to pass seven bills. I don't know why they overloaded it," he said, pointing out that only three bills could be passed before adjournment. "The budget will occupy most of it (sessions). And most of these bills are contentious in nature."

Apart from the General Appropriations Act, the senators agreed to give priority to the proposal seeking to establish a credit information system, the Electric Power Industry Reform bill, the biofuels program bill, the anti-terror bill, the automated election bill and the income tax relief bill.



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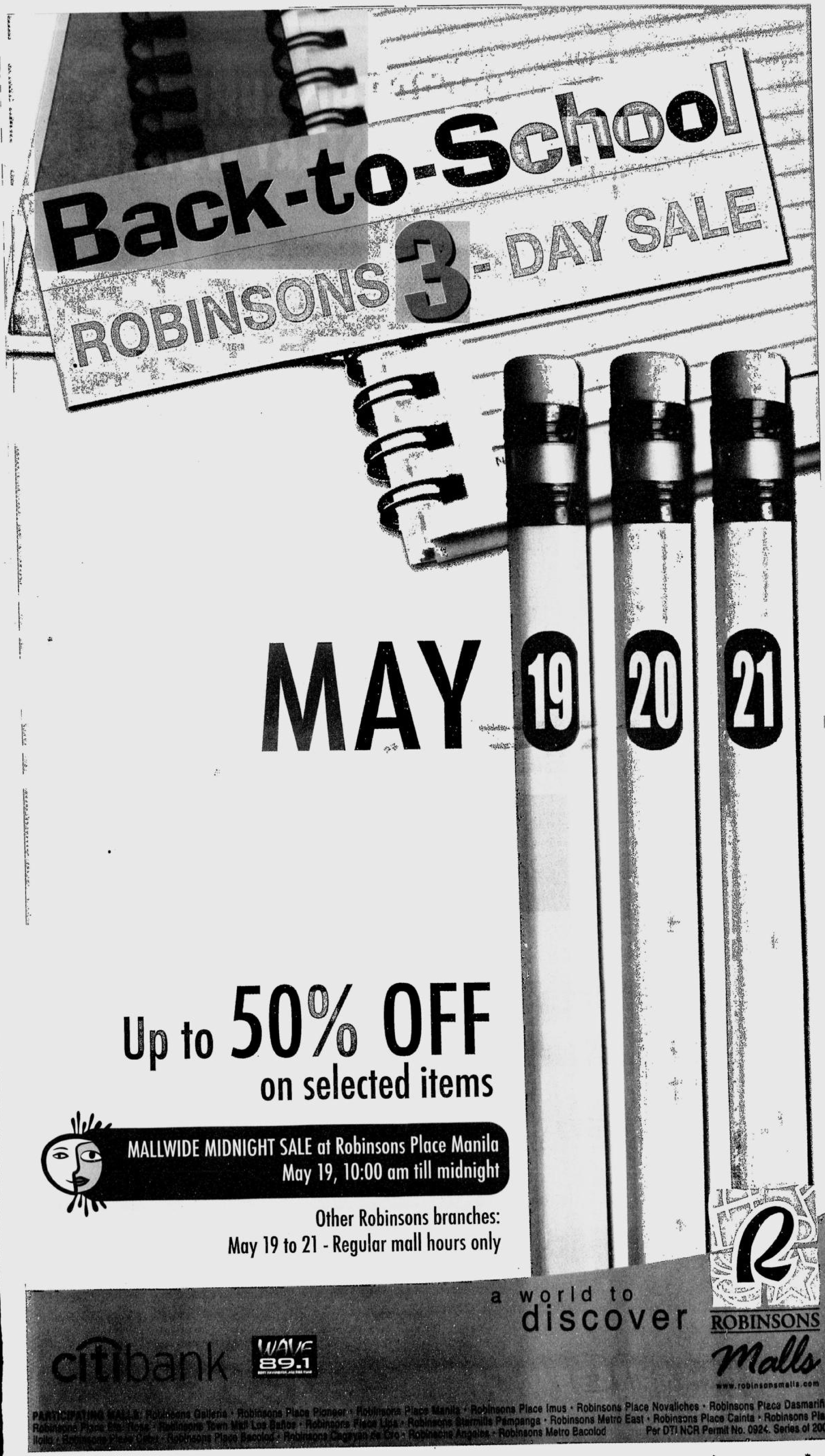

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Per DTI NCR Permit No. 0924. Series of 2006.

Foes come together for juvenile justice

By Christine O. Avendaño

SETTING ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES for a few minutes, political foes yesterday came together to witness the signing into law of a measure that aims to reform the justice system for juvenile offenders or "children in conflict with the law."

In a simple ceremony in Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, or Republic Act No. 9344, and said it was a "fitting prelude" to the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council meeting that was to convene immediately afterward.

"(I)t shows that the executive-legislative working together is as good as ever when it comes to our future generations," said the President in a statement she read at the Ledac meeting.

Both the signing of the new law and the Ledac meeting were attended by Senate President Franklin Drilon and Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan, former allies of President Arroyo who have become among her staunchest critics, and other members of the Senate, which has collided with Malacañang recently over several issues, primarily the proposal to abolish the chamber on the way to a unicameral-parliamentary from of government.

Following the signing ceremony, Malacañang praised the members of Congress for coming up with the landmark law that would "protect children in conflict with the law from abuse and exploitation."

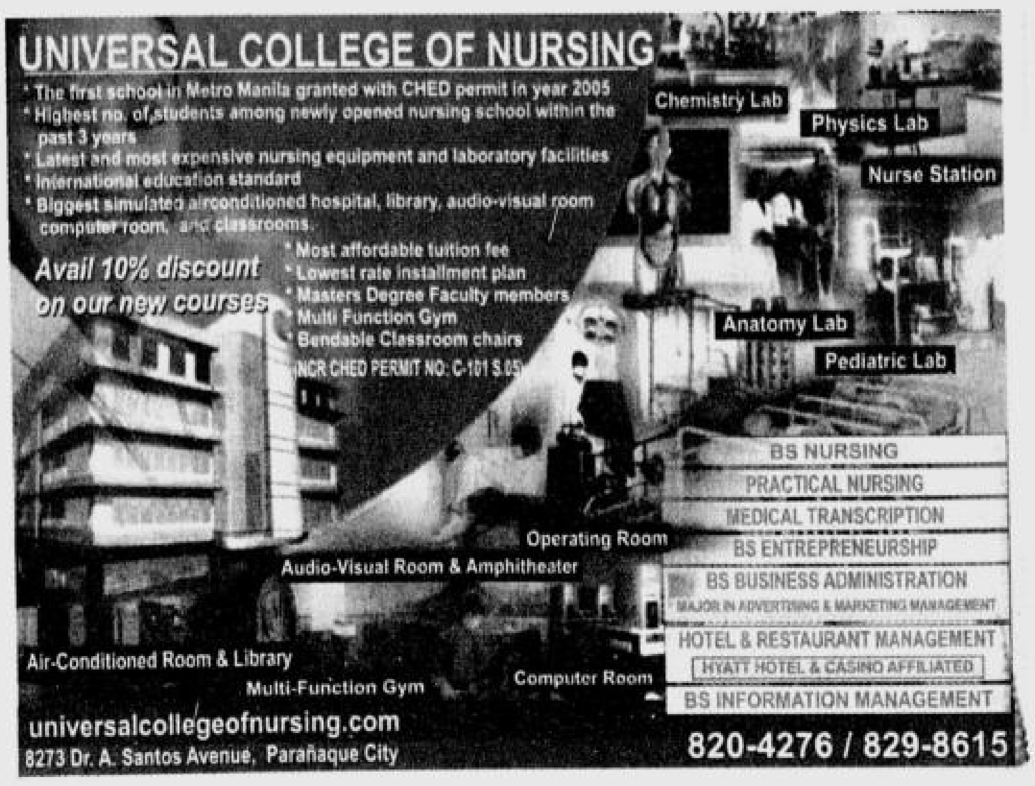
"The executive branch will extend its fullest support to its implementation as we pursue reforms in our penal system in cooperation with local government units," said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye in a statement.

Under the new law, a Juvenile Justice and Welfare System will be created to be supervised by the Department of Justice.

The new body will assist in the review and redrafting of existing policies and regulations and in the formulation of new ones relating to juvenile justice and welfare.

The law requires the development of a comprehensive juvenile intervention program in the local government units from the barangay to the provincial levels.

It also states how the authorities should treat children aged 15 and below when they are taken into custody and the procedures to follow when they are investigated.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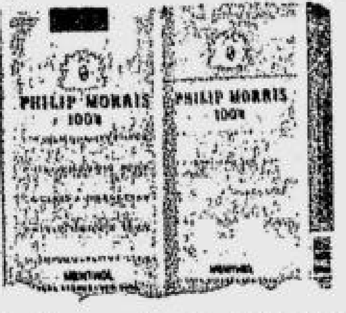

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Journalist shot dead …

From page A1

Orsolino was on his way to the Palace when he was ambushed.

An employee of the Social Security System, identified as Annie Clemente, was wounded when she was hit by a stray bullet in the right leg, said PO2 Pete Rios.

Clemente was seated at her desk inside her office in the SSS-Malabon branch when the bullet found her.

The gunmen fled after engaging operatives from the Department of Transportation and Communication in a shootout, police said.

The DOTC men were in the area at the time reportedly on a confidential operation.

"The DOTC operatives fired at the escaping suspects and reportedly wounded one of them," Rios said.

Besides being a journalist, Orsolino was an official of his barangay and president of the Lupa Homeowners Association. He had come from his house at Phase I Lupa, Tonsuya, Malabon, when he was shot.

Orsolino was the 78th member of the media to be killed violently since the restoration of democracy in the country in 1986, according to records of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP).

An INQUIRER tally based on reports from various sources, including NUJP, put the death count at 101.

"We gathered that he used to travel with someone and it was the first time that he travelled alone in his car," Rios said.

He said the assailants, who might have been waiting for Orsolino to be alone, apparently were cruising beside his car when they opened fire from close range.

"Based on the broken glass window on the driver's side and the location of the bullet holes, they sidled up close to the car," Rios said.

The assailants abandoned their motorcycle, with license plate number UN-4534, and took over a passing white FX Tamaraw being driven by one Manuelito Navarro. The FX was later found abandoned along Road-10.

Found in the vehicle were a black sweater printed with the word "Guardians," a grey shirt that said "Compliments of Mayor Pidi of Dasmariñas, Cavite" on it and a face towel.

Orsolino died from a lone gunshot wound in the abdomen.

A cousin of Orsolino's, Elpidio Melendres, said the journalist and his wife Alissa had five children, all of them still in grade school.

Called "Atot" by his relatives, Orsolino had helped residents in his neighborhood acquire the land on which they had been considered squatters before, Melendres said.

He said Orsolino was on his last term as a barangay councilor and had always been the object of envy of some residents, who also wanted to become leaders in their area.

The Malacañang Press Corps condemned the murder.

MPC president Ferdie Maglalang said: "We hope that they (the authorities) will put a final stop to the continued killings and harassment of Filipino journalists across the country."

MPC said Orsolino "will be fondly remembered as oné of those who refused to be silenced in upholding the principles of freedom of the press." *With a report from Alcuin Papa*

2 new slays for task force

From page A1

tabloid reporter Albert Orsolino in Caloocan City. *(Story at left.)*

The manner in which the killings were carried out—assassins on motorcycles—bore similarities to the murders of militants also involving motorcycle-riding gunmen during the years 1986-88, leftist groups said.

Some of the officials in the Armed Forces at the time are now serving President Macapagal-Arroyo, they said.

Several of the more recent killings of activists were also carried out by armed men on motorcycles.

The killers of Doton were armed with a .45-cal. automatic pistol and had tailed the brothers before shooting them along a village road, Chief Insp. Federico Paneda said.

"We were aboard a tricycle and were following them but they were too fast," said Laida Doton, daughter of Cancio, who was with other relatives at the time of the shooting.

"Somewhere in Camangaan, we heard shots and we even saw the motorcycle [the suspects were riding] going back to the town proper," Laida said.

"Then we saw my father and my uncle already lying on the road."

Don't blame GMA

Laida said the killers' red Honda motorcycle had been seen around the village the past several days.

Militants have blamed the killings of activists on the military which, in turn, said the murders could be the result of factional rivalries among leftist groups.

Doton was chair of the farmers group Timpuyog ti Mannalon a Mangwayawaya ti Agno (Timmawa), which has been opposing the operation of the San Roque multipurpose dam project at the Pangasinan-Benguet border.

The group has also been working for just compensation for gold panners displaced by the dam.

Doton had led Timmawa's antigovernment rallies.

Leftist purges

Malacañang said it was unfair to put the blame on Ms Arroyo.

"I think these things are beyond the control of the President. I don't think it's proper to think that just because a militant has been killed, the government had something to do with it," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters.

Ermita disputed claims that the political killings were inspired by a government crackdown on leftists.

"I don't see it. In my long experience in government and the military, government forces have always been blamed whenever an alleged leftist element dies. But this has been rarely proved so we should stop saying there is a pattern," said Ermita.

No suspects

He said that if there were purges in the communist ranks, these "were being undertaken by the leftist members themselves."

Ermita cited Romulo Kintanar, Filemon "Popoy" Lagman and Arturo Tabara as examples of leftists killed by their comrades, or former comrades.

"We have no suspects but we believe that his (Doton's) death is linked to the issues that he fought for which concerned the welfare of the farmers and the unfulfilled promises of the government to those affected by the dam," said Fr. Teri Revollido, chair of Bayan-Pangasinan.

In Pampanga, police have produced an artist's sketch of one of the two killers of Bayan Muna coordinator Manuel Nardo, who was gunned down in the City of San Fernando on Saturday.

The killer was between 28 and 33 years old, between 5'7" and 5'9" tall and of heavy build, police said, adding that the sketch did not match the photographs of criminals in the police files.

Challenge to PNP

"It's as if we're being challenged," police spokesperson Senior Supt. Samuel Pagdilao said of the news of Doton's assassination, which occurred soon after the government created Task Force Usig to look into the killings of political activists, journalists, politicians and other civil servants.

"But this will not dampen the resolution of the task force to get to the bottom of these killings," he added.

The task force has tallied 122 killings of activists under the Arroyo presidency and said that in 25 of those cases, the military or paramilitary units were the suspects. Thirteen other deaths were believed to be the result of purges within the leftist ranks, it said.

The INQUIRER has recorded 123 deaths during the five-year period.

Veiled threat

House Deputy Minority Leader Satur Ocampo said he and the other four members of the "Batasan 5" party-list lawmakers could be the next targets of "death squads" killing political militants.

"When you look at it, logically we're targets of physical elimination," said Ocampo.

He said Maj. Gen. Jovito Palparan, commander of the 7th Army Infantry Division, had actually issued a "veiled threat to our lives by classifying us as enemies of the state."

Ocampo called for an independent commission to be headed by a retired justice and to include persons of known probity to investigate the killings.

Replying to an e-mailed query, Luis Jalandoni, chair of the negotiating panel of the communist-led umbrella group National Democratic Front, noted that many of the killings had been committed by gunmen on motorcycles.

NPA punishment

"Such motorcycle-riding assassins were common during the 1986-1988 period … They were used to destroy the Partido ng Bayan and mass organizations in the localities," Jalandoni said from the Netherlands.

Communist spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal vowed that New People's Army rebels would punish the military units concerned and the officials behind the series of murders.

In a statement, Rosal said the CPP condemned as "utterly malicious and complete lies" government claims that the murders of activists were part of "internal purging" inside the movement.

He assailed government claims it had discovered another mass grave of alleged NPA purge victims.

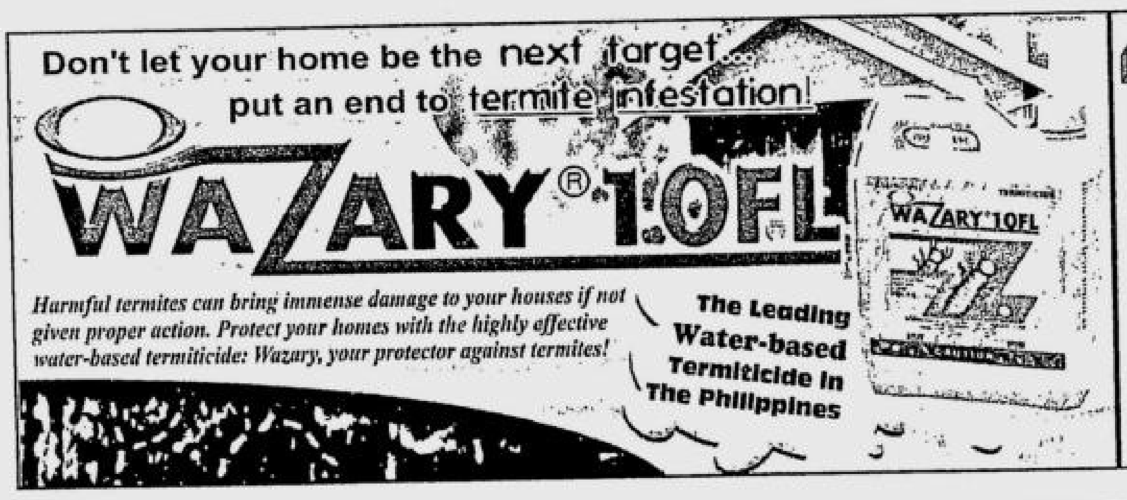
"To prop up their psywar offensive, the AFP is once again busy hauling their collection of old skeletons from their *bodegas*, dumping them into new excavations and portraying these as so-called NPA mass graves," Rosal said.

Appeal from church

CPP officials owned up to killing hundreds of members suspected of being government agents during their "internal cleansing" in the 1980s. Perpetrators of the cleansing were eventually punished, according to the CPP.

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines and the Promotion of Church People's Response also called on the Arroyo administration to investigate the killing of militant pastor Jemias Tinambacan in Misamis Occidental and of other church people before him.

Sharon Rose Duremdes, NCCP secretary general, urged Ms Arroyo "to act and act swiftly in giving justice" to the victims. *With reports from Luige A. del Puerto, Michael Lim Ubac and Dona Pazzibugan in Manila; Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk; Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Delfin T. Mallari Jr. and Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Michael F. Sarcauga, Jeffrey M. Tupas and Judy Quiros, PDI Mindanao Bureau; and Maielle Montayre*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2. The *TRANSCO-HO* now invites Bids from Eligible Bidders for *Various ICT Resources*. Delivery of the GOODS is required *within thirty (30) calendar days from receipt of approved Purchase Order*. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from the Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.
4. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders, starting May 10, 2006 to June 13, 2006 from 9:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of *One Thousand Pesos (PhP 1,000.00)*. The method of payment will be CASH. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
5. The *TRANSCO-HO* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **May 29, 2006 at 2:00 P.M.** at same address below. Requests for clarifications on the bid documents should be submitted before the Pre-Bid Conference.
6. Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before **2:00 P.M. of June 14, 2006**. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any of the following form and amount:

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4. Foreign government guarantee	100% of ABC

or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late bids shall not be accepted.

7. Bid opening shall be on **June 14, 2006 / 2:00 P.M.** at the *Admin Conference Rm same address below*. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below.
8. The *National Transmission Corporation* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

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Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – May 10 & 17, 2006)

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2. The *Municipality of Alamada, Cotabato* now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the Construction of Bay-ang Potable Water System Level III which has a pipeline length of approximately 23 kilometers plus. The Works shall include the General Requirements; Source Developments and Storage Facilities Works; Transmission and Distribution Facilities Works; Pavement Demolition, Excavation and Restoration Works, Supply of Maintenance Materials and Tools. Completion of Works is required by 360 calendar days.
3. Bidding will be conducted in accordance with relevant procedures for open competitive bidding as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," to the extent it is consistent with Asian Development Bank's procurement procedures and is open to all Bidders from eligible source countries as defined in *"Guidelines for Procurement Under Asian Development Bank Loans"*.
4. The documents required in the Eligibility Documents shall be submitted as part of the Technical Documents of the Bidders as provided in the Instructions to Bidders.
5. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), Municipality of Alamada, Cotabato and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on May 15, 2006 to June 19, 2006.
6. A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Pesos (Php 10,000.00).
7. The BAC, Municipality of Alamada will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all Eligible Bidders on June 5, 2006 2:00P.M. at the Municipal Hall, Alamada, Cotabato
8. Eligible Bidders must submit their Bids at the address below on or before June 19, 2006 @ 2:00 pm. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in the form of Manager's Check/Cashier's Check/Certified Check and in an amount of Eight Hundred Fifty Thousand Pesos (PhP 850,000.00) or an equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency. Late Bids shall not be accepted. Bid opening shall be on June 19, 2006 @ 2:00 pm at the Municipal Hall, Alamada, Cotabato. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below:

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Attn: Mr. Antonio G. Gabunales
Municipal Assessor's Office
Municipality of Alamada
Province of Cotabato

9. To be considered eligible and qualified a Bidder must:
    - a. have a successful experience as prime contractor in the construction of at least one (1) work of a nature and complexity equivalent to the Works during the last five (5) years, such being verifiable from completion certificates. To comply with this requirement the single contract cited should be at least Twenty Seven Million Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (PhP 27,500,000.00).
    - b. have a minimum average annual construction turnover over the last three (3) years equal to Thirty Four Million Pesos (PhP 34,000,000.00).
    - c. submit audited balance sheets or, if not required by the law of the applicants country, other financial statements acceptable to the Procuring Entity, for the last five (5) years to demonstrate the current soundness of the applicants financial position and its prospective long-term profitability.
10. Completion of the Works is required within 360 Calendar Days from the Start of Construction.
11. The Municipality of Alamada, Cotabato reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Attention: Mr. Antonio G. Gabunales
Municipal Assessor's Office
Municipal Hall, Alamada, Cotabato
Contact No. 09179576291

(SGD.) ANTONIO G. GABUNALES
BAC Chairman

(PDI–May 11 & 17, 2006)

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel. Nos. (632)920-6401 • (632)920-6446
E-mail: member_relations@sss.gov.ph • Web site http://www.sss.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid
SSS Ee's Rice Grant for the 3rd Quarter CY2006
Brief description of the Project

Degree of Milling	Well Milled Rice (WMR)
Moisture Content	14% (maximum)
Grade Specifications	Headrice – 90% to 95% (minimum) Broken – 10% to 5% (maximum)
Packaging	50 kilos in light yellow woven polyprophylene
Labeling	With front & back markings
Quantity	7,476 sacks

1. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM*, through the Operating Expense-Rice Grant intends to apply the sum of P11,214,000.00 (P1,500.00/sack) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the supply and door-to-door delivery of approximately 7,476 sacks of Freshly Milled Premium Grade Commercial Rice for SSS employees for the third quarter of Year 2006. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.
2. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the supply and door-to-door delivery of approximately 7,476 sacks of Freshly Milled Premium Grade Commercial Rice. Supply and door-to-door delivery of the GOODS is required within thirty (30) calendar days after contract signing/receipt of purchase order. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, Instruction to Bidders (ITB).
3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section I of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post qualification procedure.
4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8 AM TO 5 PM
5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of P10,000.00. The method of payment will be on a cash basis/manager's check payable to SSS to be paid at the SSS Cashiering Department, SSS Main Bldg. Ground floor, upon accomplishment of SSS Form R-6. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.
6. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on *May 19, 2005 at 2:00p.m.*, Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Bldg., East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City.
7. Bids and eligibility requirements must be submitted at the Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Building on *June 02, 2005 not later than 2:00p.m.* All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in a form and amount indicated in the Bid Tender Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted.
8. Bid opening shall be on *June 02, 2005 at 2:00p.m.*, Green Room, 12th Floor, SSS Main Bldg., East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address given.
9. The *SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Bid and Awards Committee
The Secretariat
8th Floor, SSS Main Building
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City
Tel # 922-2991, 924-7380, 920-6401 local 5491
Email – bac@sss.gov.ph
Facsimile number – (02) 924-7380

THE CHAIRMAN
BIDS & AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI – May 17, 2006)

Gov't elated by 1st major victory in tax credit scam

MALACAÑANG YESTERDAY cheered its first major victory in the government's seven-year battle to prosecute a multibillion tax credit scam saying that this would boost government efforts to clamp down on tax fraud.

"It's a victory for the government and we are happy about the resolution of the case. The tax credit problem will not only involve Shell but also other companies that availed themselves of the tax credit in the past," said Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor.

The Court of Appeal reversed a previous ruling and ordered Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. to pay the government P570 million in tax liabilities for using tax credit certificates that were fraudulently secured to offset its liabilities in 1998.

The TCCs were acquired from Faustino Chingkoe whose garments companies issued bogus tax credit certificates or instruments that entitle bearer to a refund of taxes. The tax credit certificates can be sold to another company to offset its tax liabilities.

"The bottom line here is that while we achieved victory we have to ensure that nothing like this will be repeated in the future," Defensor said in an interview.

Three more cases—one against Shell and two others against Petron Corp.—are still pending in court.

A presidential task force formed in 1999 to investigate the scam tagged one of Chingkoe's firm for obtaining around P131 million in tax credit certificates from 1994 to 1997 despite a 1993 closure order enforced by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The government issues a tax credit certificate.

Cherish houses, cops told

NOTING THE DANGERS that policemen take in carrying out their duties, Vice President Noli de Castro yesterday urged them to cherish "with the same fervor" the housing privilege given them by the government and the private sector represented by the Gawad Kalinga.

De Castro, chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, made the pitch during the launching of the Pulis Kalinga Macabulos Pilot Housing Project in Camp Macabulos in Tarlac city.

He said that while government was prioritizing the housing needs of the informal sector such as those living along the right-of-way of the PNR North and South lines, the housing sector was also focusing on the same needs of the government sector, particularly the low-salaried employees.

Under the Institutional Housing Program of the government, priority is given to the teachers, soldiers, policemen and LGU employees.

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RP joins unprecedented drill on tsunami evacuation

From page A1

"It's important always to be prepared, that we do not expose people to hazards of disastrous events," said Renato Solidum Jr., head of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs), which monitors volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and tsunami.

"That's better than having to do a search and rescue later," Solidum said.

During the drill early Wednesday, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii will send out warnings about mock earthquakes off the coasts of Luzon and Chile powerful enough to set off a tsunami across the vast ocean.

Governments of the participating countries will then see how fast they receive the warnings and how rapidly they can relay it to their domestic emergency alert systems.

Mock evacuation

While other countries will stop at that, the Philippines will stage an evacuation of residents in the far-flung coastal village of Buhatan in Santo Domingo, Albay, 340 km southeast of Manila.

Isolated by mountains and distance, normally laid-back Buhatan was a beehive of activity on Tuesday as Phivolcs personnel installed roadside metal signs pointing the way to safety during the drill.

Huge streamers announced the "first-ever trans-Pacific tsunami drill" called "Exercise Pacific Wave 2006." Children milled around, gawking at outsiders and journalists.

So happy

"We're so happy some people are advising us how to deal with such a disaster. I won't be as nervous if it does happen," said Sonia Siapno, a 54-year-old housewife.

Simplicio Balmas, a 74-year-old retired fisherman with 11 children, understands the urgency of the drill and has been walking briskly lately to be able to join the mock evacuation despite his arthritis.

Balmas said he saw how a powerful typhoon brought walls of seawater crashing on Buhatan, killing 13 villagers in the early 1950s.

"I don't want to see that scene again. There were so many dead people and people looked so helpless," he said as he stood by the sun-splashed Albay Gulf, its waves gently slapping the shore.

Lifesaving

"I know we're doing a lifesaving exercise, but I still feel nervous," he added.

Buhatan, sandwiched between the Albay Gulf and the Philippine Sea, is often lashed by typhoons and has been hit by ashfalls and debris from the nearby Mayon Volcano.

A narrow road leading to the village was partly blocked by landslides from a storm last week. Despite lurking dangers, there is no police station, hospital, fire station or telephone lines. Some villagers rely on mobile phones or simply rush to a town 9 km away aboard pedicabs during an emergency.

While the villagers are no strangers to typhoons and volcanic eruptions, hardly anyone was aware Buhatan could be hit by a tsunami until Phivolcs officials explained the nature of the tsunami drill, according to Rene Arante of Phivolcs.

Foreign observer

Ajith Weerawardena, a meteorologist from Sri Lanka and one of the foreign officials observing the drill, said he traveled to the village to learn something that could be used to save lives in his country.

Weerawardena lamented there was no early warning system when the 2004 tsunami struck Sri Lanka, killing about 39,000 people and damaging 40,000 houses.

"If there was a warning system during that time, we would have rescued a lot of people," he told The Associated Press.

An archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, the Philippines is flanked by the Pacific Ocean to the east and the South China Sea to the west with undersea trenches—potential quake triggers—running alongside its coast on both sides.

40 tsunamis

The Philippines has been struck by about 40 tsunami in the past 400 years, Solidum said.

A 7.9-magnitude quake generated tsunami waves in the Moro Gulf in Mindanao in 1976, killing about 3,700 people. Another powerful earthquake set off by a local fault whipped up killer waves that killed 78 people on the island of Mindoro in 1994. *Reports from AP and Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

LUGAR NA DELIKADO SA TSUNAMI
KUNG MAY LINOG MAGPASIRONG SA HALANGKAW NA LUGAR O HUMARAYO SA DAGAT

FOR THE FIRST TIME, a tsunami drill with 24 countries participating will involve testing a warning system in the Pacific Ocean which has been in place since 1965 but had not been tested in an ocean-wide exercise. A warning sign is set up in the far-flung coastal village of Buhatan, Santo Domingo, Albay. AP

RP climbers near Everest summit

From page A1

and would have reached Camp 2 (6,400 meters or 21,000 feet) at press time, according to his local contacts.

In making the final assault, Garduce is expected to consider the weather as well as advice from his Sherpa climbing partner on whether "the mountain gods are showing us the way to the summit."

14 approaches

Garduce left Base Camp on Sunday and should be in Camp 3 today or tomorrow. He will trek another day to reach Camp 4.

"*Tuloy-tuloy na. Wala nang babaan. Sa tuktok na dapat* (It's all systems go. There will be no turning back. It should be the summit now)," Garduce was quoted as telling his contacts.

The Filipino climbers are taking the Hillary or Southeast Ridge Route, one of the more popular routes to the top. One of the great dangers there is well below the summit, at the Khumbu Ice Fall.

Pushing on

Among the 14 other approaches are the Northeast Ridge Route, the Southwest Face and the East or Kangshung Face. The first scouting expeditions and attempts to reach the peak were made by British teams using the north approach in the 1920s.

> Camp 4 is also known as Death Zone. Oxygen deprivation caused by high altitude, exhaustion start to take its toll on climbers

Pablo said that Oracion reached Camp 4 (8,000 m or 26,000 ft) yesterday afternoon Manila time, and that Emata was at Camp 3 (6,828 m or 22,376 ft).

"There are good weather forecasts in the next two days. So while the weather is good and the climbers are feeling fine, they are pushing on," Pablo said.

"But there are no assurances in mountaineering," he said, adding that in the case of Oracion, Camp 4 was "the point of no return."

"If the weather holds, Oracion will rest for a few hours and leave tonight (Tuesday) for the summit at around 10 p.m. Manila time," Pablo said.

He said the fixing of ropes from the Balcony, an area past Camp 4, to the summit would have been finished by the time Oracion started his final leg of the climb.

Death Zone

Camp 4 is also known as the Death Zone, where oxygen deprivation caused by the high altitude and physical and mental exhaustion start to take a toll on the climbers.

From their respective camps, the climbers will need to bring at least one oxygen tank up to the summit.

(Oxygen deprivation poses profound danger because it hampers crucial decision-making, among other things. In "Into Thin Air," his account of an ill-fated expedition in 1996 where at least 11 of his fellow climbers died in a storm, Jon Krakauer recalled standing at the peak and not being able to summon the energy to care as he "stared absently at the vast sweep of earth below." More than 29,000 feet "up in the troposphere," he wrote, "there was so little oxygen reaching my brain that my mental capacity was that of a slow child.")

Final push from Camp 4

Once climbers reach Camp 4, they will rest for only a few hours and then start their final push at around midnight to try to reach the summit in the morning.

This will allow climbers to begin their descent in the afternoon because descending at night is perilous.

Setting records

The FPMEE had originally scheduled its Everest climb next year.

But at around the time Garduce left for Nepal in March, the FPMEE decided to send its two strongest climbers, Oracion and Emata, to try to reach the peak this year as a sort of "reconnaissance climb" for the 2007 attempt.

In August of last year, Oracion and Emata made it to the top of Mt. Muztagh-Ata (24,758 ft) in the Himalayan range and set the record for the highest altitude reached by a Filipino.

That record was broken a month later when Garduce reached the peak of Mt. Cho Oyu (26,906 ft), the sixth highest mountain in the world.

The FPMEE is being supported by ABS-CBN, while Garduce is being backed by rival network GMA 7.

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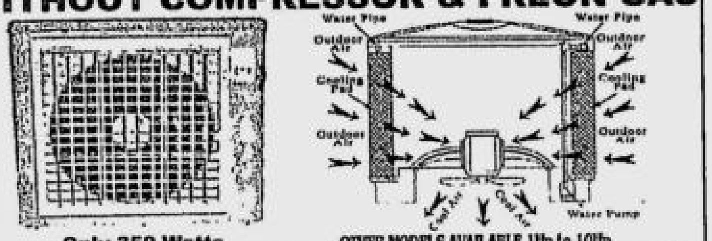

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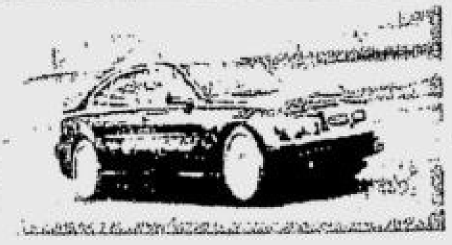
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Honor deal, Drilon urged

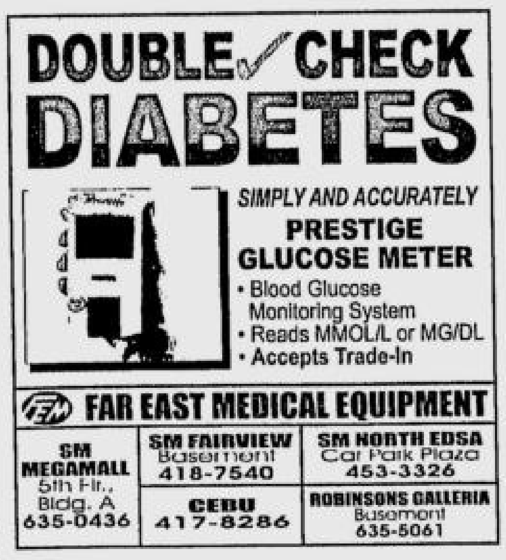
MALACAÑANG HAS JUMPED INTO THE leadership fray at the Senate as it urged Senate President Franklin Drilon to honor his "gentleman's agreement" and yield his post to Sen. Manuel Villar Jr.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said that what Drilon would do with the gentleman's agreement he struck with Villar in 2004 would "speak a lot about the kind of person he is."

"Honoring a gentleman's agreement will determine what kind of political character Drilon has. (If he breaks it), it will cast doubts on how he will conduct things in the future," said Defensor in an interview with the INQUIRER.

Villar said that he expected Drilon to honor the gentleman's agreement they reached two years ago when the two squared off for the Senate presidency. The two agreed on a power-sharing deal to avert a messy power play at the Senate.

Drilon has declared that he would turn over his post to Villar by July if the billionaire real estate developer would be able to muster the votes of the Senate majority.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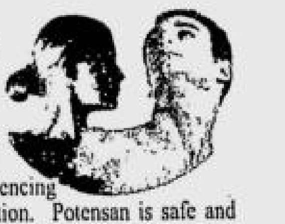

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CITY OF BAYAWAN

SPECIALIZED BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The City Government of Bayawan, through its Specialized Bids and Awards Committee, invites prospective suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid on the following project

Bid Number	Name of Project/s	Approved Budget for the Contract	Source of Fund
06-046B	Materials for the Installation of Power Lines for GK Socialized Housing	P2,784,359.00	General Fund
06-047B	Materials for Gawad Kalinga Multi-Purpose Bldg (2-units)	P 1,293,600.00	General Fund
06-048B	Materials for GK Socialized Housing Scheme II - 200 units (Bahay Masaya Type	P 13,007,082.00	General Fund

Project Location/Delivery Area : Bayawan City Warehouse
Contract Duration : 12 working days upon receipt of Purchase Order

The complete schedules of bidding activities are as follows

ACTIVITY	DATE/S
Advertisement/Posting of the Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid	May 17, 2006
Issuance of Bid Documents	May 17, 2006
Pre-bid Conference	May 26, 2006 (1:30 p.m.)
Deadline for the submission & Opening of Eligibility Requirements (for Non-Accredited Suppliers) & LOI for Accredited Suppliers (Specialized BAC Office)	June 6, 2006 (2:00 p.m.)
Deadline/Opening of Bids (Specialized BAC Office)	June 7, 2006 (10:00 a.m.)

Complete sets of Eligibility Requirements and Bid Documents will be available for issuance at the Specialized BAC Office, 2nd Floor, City Hall Bldg., Bayawan City (Tel. (035) 531-0800) upon payment of the prescribed non-refundable fee

Prospective Bidders shall duly accomplish eligibility requirements, technical and financial proposals and submit the same in 2 (two) separate sealed envelopes on or before the date indicated above

The Specialized Bids and Awards Committee reserves the right to accept or reject all bids or part thereof, to waive formality therein or to accept such bids considered most advantageous to the City Government of Bayawan.

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(PDI May 17 & 24, 2006)

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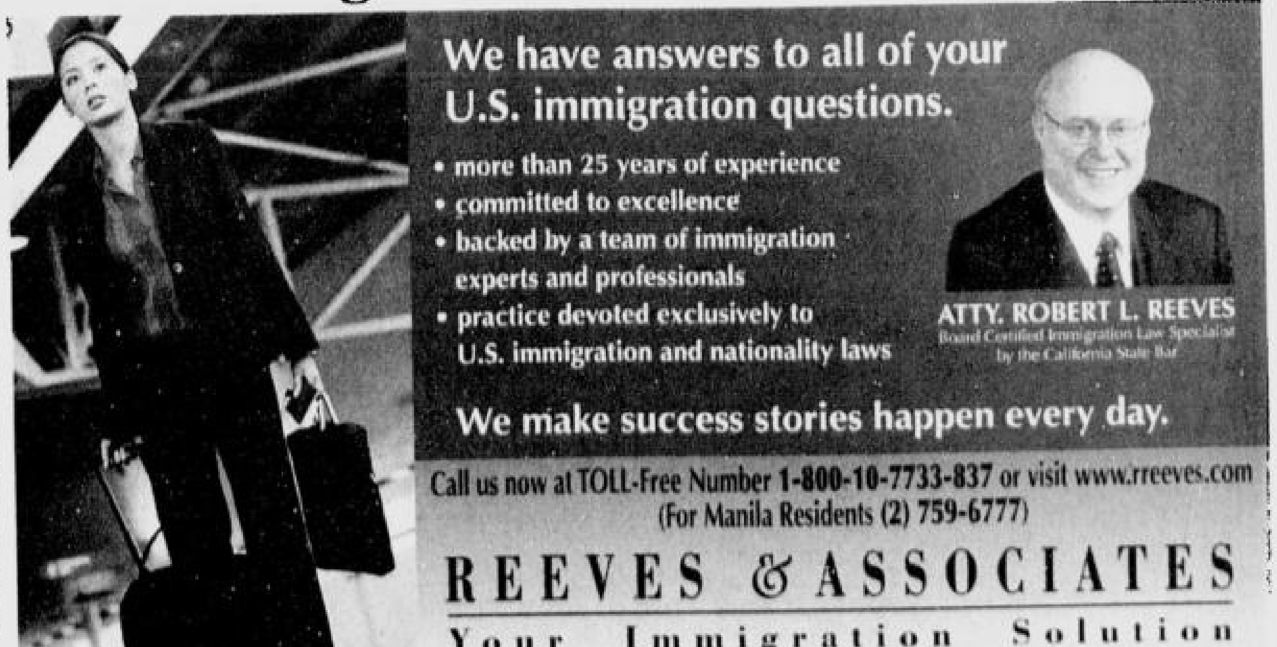
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New papal nuncio arrives

By Nikko Dizon

ARCHBISHOP FERNANDO FILONI, THE new papal nuncio, yesterday said he would be working closely with leaders of the Catholic Church in shepherding their flock.

The Philippines has the biggest Catholic population in Asia.

Filoni, the Holy See's new ambassador to the Philippines, arrived yesterday at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) at 3:30 p.m. via Thai Airways flight TG 620.

Among those who welcomed Filoni were Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Ro-sales, Fr. James Reuter, executive secretary of the National Office of the Mass Media, and officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the airport authority.

As apostolic nuncio, Filoni, 60, represents Pope Benedict XVI.

MONEY LAUNDERING

DOJ to summon SMC, bank execs to probe

By Armand N. Nocum, Margaux Ortiz and Christine O. Avendaño

THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE WILL invite top officials of San Miguel Corp. and United Coconut Planters Bank as well as alleged cronies of ousted President Joseph Estrada to shed light on accusations of money-laundering made by a former beauty queen.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said those to be invited include SMC president Ramon Ang, former UCPB president Lorenzo Tan, current UCPB chief executive officer Jeronimo Kilayko and vice presidents Alfredo Bautista and Rafael Bueno Jr., and alleged Estrada cronies Jaime Dichavez, Jimmy Borromeo and Robert Sobrepeña.

"There are [other] people mentioned who could be invited," said Gonzalez, referring to the recent news report in the Manila Standard Today that quoted US-based former beauty queen Joelle Marie Henson Pelaez as accusing Estrada and the others of opening a bank account in her name without her permission allegedly to launder money.

The invitation, Gonzalez said, would be for the purpose of a "case buildup" against those cited in the report which "mentioned a P500 million in public funds" and transactions conducted in a "public bank."

Pelaez, second runner-up in the 1999 Binibining Pilipinas beauty contest who now lives in Los Angeles, said she discovered that an account was opened in United Coconut Planters Bank in her name but the transactions, in the millions of pesos, were not hers.

She said the transactions involved money transfers and the acquisition and sale of stocks and bonds.

She said she had filed a P500-million lawsuit against those who used her name and forged her signatures on the transactions.

Gonzalez said yesterday he had asked the National Bureau of Investigation to coordinate with the Anti-Money Laundering Council in investigating the matter.

For his part, NBI Acting Director Nestor Mantaring yesterday ordered Interpol to investigate the report that Estrada may have been involved in the laundering of funds that may have been part of the "missing" P3.2-billion Jose Velarde account through the bank account in Pelaez's name.

"I have left it to Interpol to decide whom to interview first among the accused based in this country," Mantaring told reporters in an interview.

Mantaring said he had also ordered the NBI Anti-Fraud and Computer Crimes Division to coordinate with the Anti-Money Laundering Council in the case.

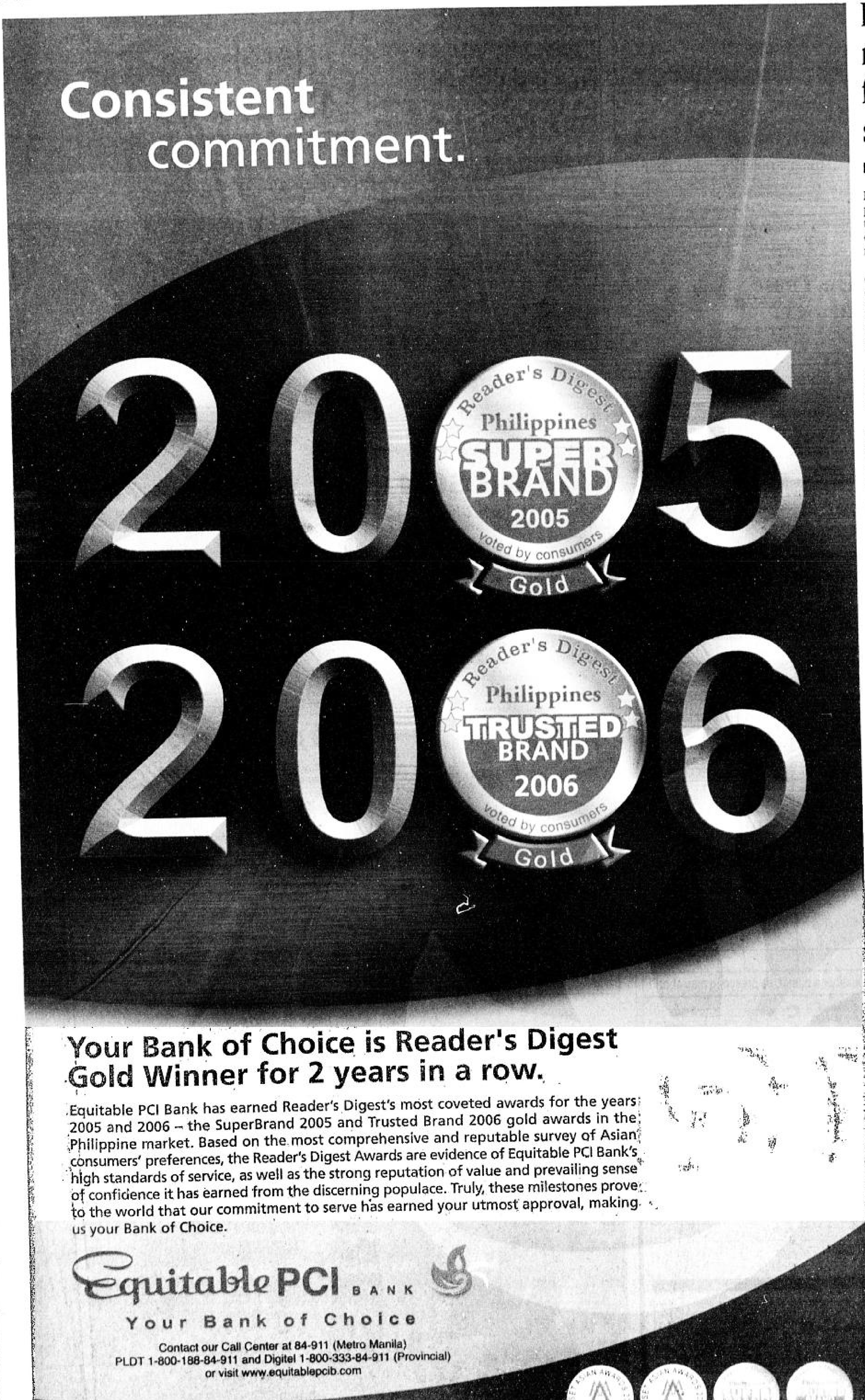
But no less than President Macapagal-Arroyo's chief of staff Michael Defensor yesterday took up the cudgels for Estrada, saying there was no basis at this point to conclude the former President or any member of his family were involved in money laundering.

"I can assure you that indeed money laundering happened but as to the involvement of the Estrada family, that is not conclusive," Defensor told reporters.

He said he saw the documents himself after meeting with the mother of Pelaez, Blanquita Pelaez, two weeks ago.

He said Blanquita Pelaez had sought the meeting to show him the papers that purported to be the money trail of the illicit bank transactions.

Pelaez, it will be recalled, was the US-based businesswoman who sued then Philippine National Police Director General Panfilo Lacson over unpaid handcuffs she had sold to the PNP. She won the case against Lacson in the US but it is not known if she was able to collect any damages.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Poor women now accepting family planning, says NSO survey

By Christian V. Esguerra

DESTITUTE WOMEN, LONG CONSIDERED A problem sector in the government's reproductive health advocacy, are showing signs of accepting family planning, according to a recent national survey.

Among 6,108 Filipino women currently engaged in family planning, the poor ones outnumbered their "non-poor" counterparts in terms of "intending" to continue the practice, according to the 2005 Family Planning Survey, conducted by the National Statistics Office.

In fact, 90 percent of the respondents in both classifications "would be willing to pay for their contraceptive supplies" in the future, the survey showed.

"That's one step already because they are willing. It's more difficult if you're poor yet you still don't want to practice family planning," NSO administrator Carmelita Ericta told reporters after the presentation of the survey results in Quezon City yesterday.

Poor, not poor

Among the respondents who are into family planning, the NSO found out that one out of four currently married women "intends to stop doing so." Ericta attributed the attitude to the women's plan to have children already.

The Family Planning Survey, which the NSO began conducting in 1995, had around 50,000 respondents for last year's study, Ericta said.

The women surveyed were aged between 15 and 49 years old and classified either as "poor" or "non-poor."

Ericta said the social classification was gauged through the respondents' possession of "household amenities," meaning appliances.

The women's willingness to use and buy their own contraceptives surfaced in the wake of another set of findings showing that the contraceptive prevalence rate (or the rate Filipinos are using contraceptives) "has not changed in the last five years."

Method of choice

Of the currently married Filipino women surveyed, 49.3 percent were into contraceptive methods while 50.7 percent of them were not, according to the NSO study.

Among those using contraceptives, 36 percent were into modern methods, with pills as still the method of choice (17.1 percent). At least 13 percent of the respondents were engaged in traditional methods like calendar, rhythm and periodic abstinence methods and withdrawal.

By next year, the government will no longer receive contraceptive donations from abroad and will have to come up with its own supplies.

In the NSO survey, three out of five married women using contraceptives said they got their supplies and services from the public sector.

"Government hospitals are the principal source of services for ligation and vasectomy," the survey said.

"'Willingness' is the keyword here," Ericta told reporters. "They (poor married women) are willing to pay for their supplies but they just don't have the capacity. Here is where help should come."

Among the country's 17 regions, Cagayan Valley registered the highest contraceptive prevalence rate at 58 percent, followed by Northern Mindanao (57 percent) and Central Luzon (55 percent), according to the survey.

The Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao had the lowest rate with 16 percent.

"Family planning practice is associated with the socio-economic characteristics of the women," Ericta said in a statement. "Women who are elementary graduates or have reached a higher level of education are more likely to practice family planning than those who have not completed elementary school or those with no education." *With Erika Sauler*

ISSN 0116-2642
Vol. 21 No. 158

OPINION

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THE PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER, INC. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
•Subscription Hotline 896-6000

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Extermination

EDITORIAL

OVER A CENTURY AGO, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE gained two words as part of the legacy of the Filipino-American War. They were "boondocks" and "amok." In the case of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, his comment that party-list representatives should "go back to the mountains" is the kind of antique thinking that keeps rebels in the boondocks, while officials in Manila like the justice secretary run amok. It would be easy to pass off Gonzalez's tartness as more of the usual, except for the fact that whatever he says partakes of official policy.

Abraham Lincoln said a nation cannot be half slave and half free and that a nation divided against itself cannot stand. The overwhelming majority of Filipinos would prefer a nation in which the rule of law prevails, and in which its component provinces aren't haunted by the specter of perpetual conflict. The last half of the 20th century up to the present has been marked by entire swathes of the country being only nominally under the control of the Republic. Where the forces of the state and of rebels contend, the only victors are poverty, banditry and the abuse of human rights.

Because no country can move forward if perpetually distracted by anti-insurgency campaigns, governments have tried, with varying degrees of success, to accomplish through negotiations what all-out war can never achieve: an end to fighting, and the start of rebuilding. Painfully, slowly, our country has learned that the politics of exclusion and persecution breeds more evils than it stamps out; and that the politics of negotiation and compromise achieves much more in terms of stability and peace.

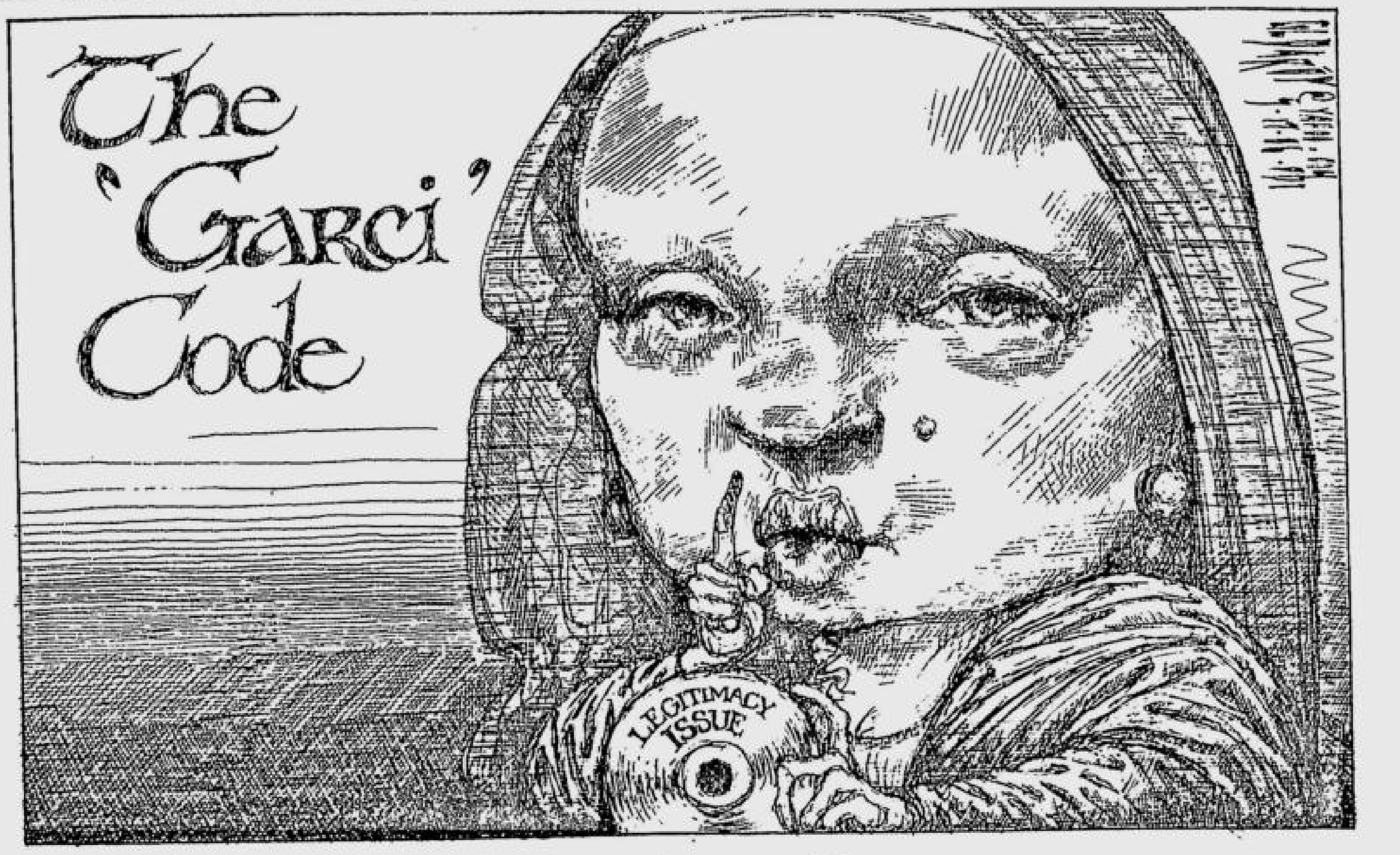
Since the Edsa Revolution, the policy of the state has been to negotiate a peace while gradually expanding the democratic space. This process reached a high point during the Ramos administration, in which a general achieved what the politicians failed to do. Since then, however, negotiations have given way to hostilities, with varying degrees of success.

However, what sets apart the Arroyo administration from previous ones (except, perhaps, the Marcos administration) is its indifference and even tacit support for extralegal solutions to the insurgency problem. Where administrations (and rebels) once used military offensives as sticks to make the carrot of negotiations more attractive, the Arroyo administration has abandoned negotiations, and half-heartedly pursued military offensives. Instead, political liquidations have become the defining characteristic of the government's attitude toward its ideological opponents.

Rhetorically, of course, President Macapagal-Arroyo and her officials condemn the assassination of leaders and organizers of the Left. Their rhetoric is accompanied by actions that speak louder than words. Military officers suspected of complicity in, if not the actual masterminding of, political killings are promoted and decorated. Elected representatives are detained without charges, or threatened with legal action so as to restrict their movements. And in reaction to a public outcry over such actions, the justice secretary's only reaction is to challenge leftists to head for the hills.

President Arroyo and Gonzalez and their enemies from the party lists won't pay the immediate price for such bloodthirsty posturing. It is the people who will. Provinces plagued by insurgency will continue to bleed, and their residents will continue to seek refuge elsewhere. No rehabilitation, much less improvement of local economies or infrastructure can take place. This serves the purposes of a government that prefers a state of conflict to peace, which might turn people's minds to the harsh realities of our national life. It serves the interests of insurgents who would stubbornly fight, even if it means reducing the mountains and then the plains to ashes.

It certainly does not serve the public good. It does nothing for democracy, and extinguishes the hope that leftists can meaningfully participate in our democratic way of life. Ideally, ideology should be voted upon in the polls. In reality, we are increasingly seeing it lead, whichever side a Filipino might be, to the grave.



Lim: Drilon will stay

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

WHAT COULD PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo and Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago have talked about on the way to and from Saudi Arabia? Before Santiago left the Philippines, she was, judging from her previous statements, still against Charter change. After coming home with President Arroyo, she is singing a different tune. She said there will be no more Senate by July when the 13th Congress convenes as a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution and shift to a parliamentary government. What could GMA have told her or offered her while on board the plane to make her change her mind?

Since GMA's economic adviser has already called for the relief of Revenue Commissioner Jose Marie Bunag for the BIR's failure to meet its collection target for April, I think the President may have promised the top BIR post to somebody very close to the senator. After all, this person used to be with the BIR and is now a presidential assistant for revenue enhancement.

GMA is so desperate to have Cha-cha before July, when it is expected that a new impeachment complaint will be filed against her, that she will promise anything just so there is a change in the form of government. That is the only way to ward off a new impeachment charge. The people's initiative train is already on the way to derailment, what with so many obstacles on the tracks, both legal and political. The last hope is a constituent assembly because a constitutional convention would take too long to save GMA from impeachment.

Oh yes, there's another way to evade impeachment: She can resign before July and call for a snap election.

* * *

A snap election seems to be also in the offing for the National Press Club which held its own elections last May 7. But instead of only one election, the NPC had two. The two competing tickets held their own separate elections last Sunday. The committee on elections created by NPC president Antonio Antonio held its election on the fourth floor of the club's building. The ticket of Alice H. Reyes of the Manila Times won there.

The competing ticket of Roy Mabasa of the Bulletin obtained a temporary restraining order from the court against the committee on election, which had disqualified ex-president Louie Logarta of the Tribune, who was unable to pay his rental debts of almost P70,000 by deadline time, and a photographer surnamed Reyes who was declared a nuisance candidate.

The Alice Reyes ticket said the TRO was defective and held an election anyway. Instead of observing the TRO it asked for, the Mabasa ticket held its own election in the parking lot after a majority of the board, most of whom were in the Mabasa ticket, created its own election committee. Expectedly, Mabasa and his ticket won there.

So now the NPC has two sets of officers. Which one is the legitimate winner? *Parang* national elections.

Reyes said her ticket is the legitimate winner. It had the roster of NPC members, while the Mabasa ticket had none.

Mabasa said he is the legitimate winner since he got more votes than Reyes. But that was because anybody could vote in the election downstairs, Reyes countered. In fact, some members who had already voted upstairs were persuaded to vote again downstairs.

That election cannot be an accurate measure of the wishes of the members. The judge hearing the case may be inclined to nullify both elections and call for a new one, this time supervised by the court.

* * *

In the Senate, there may or may not be a new president. Senate President Franklin Drilon has stated that he would honor his agreement with Sen. Manuel Villar to split the six-year term of the Senate president. He said he would resign as president by July. But that would not automatically make Villar Senate president. He would have to be elected by the 23 senators. But Villar may not be able to get the required 13 votes. He has only four sure votes.

In fact, there is no group that has the numbers to unseat Drilon. He has only five sure votes, the opposition has seven, or possibly eight, and UFOs ("unidentified flying objects") seven or six. Since no group has enough votes to elect a new president, the status quo would prevail and Drilon would remain as Senate president.

Sen. Alfredo Lim, who was a guest at the Kapihan sa Manila last Monday along with Chair Bayani Fernando of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), confirmed this division of forces in the Senate. Lim said that even assuming seven UFOs would vote for Villar with the four senators identified with him and the administration, that would add up to only 11 votes. Lim, who belongs to the opposition, said the seven opposition senators are likely vote for Drilon. That, plus the five votes Drilon controls makes 12—one vote short of the magic 13. That one vote would not be hard to get once you are almost there, Lim noted.

For his part, Fernando said that while traffic may be heavy during the opening of classes next month, the light at the end of the tunnel of Metro Manila's chaotic traffic can already be seen. He said the MMDA would plant computer chips in the windshields of all the buses with franchises for the Edsa route. With these chips, it would be easy to spot the colorum and out-of-line buses.

Traffic congestion on Edsa, he said, is caused by buses, only one-third full, lined up bumper-to-bumper along almost the whole length of Edsa. Many of them have franchises for provincial routes but their operators insist on plying Edsa.

They have to go back to the provinces, where there is an extreme lack of transportation, or their franchises would be cancelled, Fernando said.

Generations

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THAT WAS A PRETTY HEART-WRENCHING story that came out on our front page last Sunday, the one that told of Molly, a 57-year-old woman who lost her daughter to a violent death in Bicol last March. Her daughter, Erika, had joined the NPA, wanting to change the world. She was killed instead in a raid by government troops. Erika would have turned 21 last May 8.

Molly herself was never an activist. She had preferred a quieter life devoted to contemplation, to changing herself instead of the world, during her own school years. But she had raised her child to see her surroundings for all that they were and could be, and with no small help from UP, she had done so beyond what Molly herself could have imagined. Filled with the fire of youth and the dream of the ages, Erika had taken up arms to fight the things—and the people—that shackled her country. She paid the ultimate price for it.

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Bring it on, GMA allies say of new impeach rap

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE MAJORITY yesterday dared the opposition to "cut the talk and just bring on their new impeachment complaint" against President Macapagal-Arroyo even as they and some of the President's aides predicted nearly instant death for a second such indictment in just over a year.

The challenge was contained in a statement issued by House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles jointly with Representatives Antonio Cuenco and Edwin Uy in which they also criticized a statement by Minority Leader Francis Escudero that opposition members who refuse to sign the new indictment should leave the House minority bloc.

Escudero said Monday that the new complaint against Ms Arroyo would be ready by the end of the month and would likely include the recent spate of killings of leftist activists and administration acts struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

Malacañang was confident the new impeachment case would be immediately thrown out by a House dominated by members of the President's political coalition.

"Impeachment was junked in the first instance and will be junked again as a desperate move by a conspiracy of self-serving interests," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said in a statement. He added that the public was "not only weary but bored by these overtures."

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez used more colorful language with respect to what the administration would do when the new complaint is filed, which Escudero said could be during the President's State of the Nation address on July 27 "at the latest."

"We will kill it at the first instance," Gonzalez told reporters. "Why allow it to become a festering situation?"

Nograles said the opposition was resorting to the "law of the jungle" with its threat to purge members who do not sign the impeachment complaint against the President.

"If the opposition still believes that impeachment would be a mere numbers game, then it (is) obvious that the majority would win because they have the numbers and they need not read or study the impeachment complaint anymore," the congressmen's joint statement said.

The statement said the Supreme Court decisions on Executive Order 464, calibrated preemptive response (CPR) and Proclamation 1017 as grounds for impeachment would be a hard sell. "These will not stand as bases because there was no culpable violation of the Constitution or betrayal of public trust. The government implemented those policies to protect the government and national interest, not the President."

Christine O. Avendaño and Armand N. Nocum

DOE asks oil firms to offer PUV discounts

By Abigail L. Ho and Jerome Aning

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HAS ASKED oil firms to offer additional discounts to drivers of public utility vehicles after Malacañang on Monday slashed the tariff on oil for six months.

After a meeting with oil firm representatives yesterday, Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya said the DOE was seeking a reprieve for the transport sector by moving to expand the discount on diesel fuel prices to P2 a liter, from the current P1 a liter.

"The tariff reduction will be applied to all products, across the board. We're not asking them to give discounts for LPG (cooking gas), gasoline or even for diesel entirely. We just want them to give more discounts in their jeepney and bus lanes," Abaya said.

Malacañang issued on Monday Executive Order 527 directing the reduction of the 3-percent tariff on crude and refined petroleum product imports to between 2 and 0 percent, depending on world oil price triggers.

The guidelines for the implementation of the order, including what consisted the trigger prices, are now being finalized by the DOE.

Abaya said computations made by the DOE and the oil firms showed that a 1-percentage-point tariff reduction would translate to savings of around P1 a liter for the oil firms. "The difference in our computations is just about 3 centavos a liter, so there shouldn't be a problem with that."

Also yesterday, the militant labor group Kilusang Mayo Uno called for the repeal of the oil industry deregulation law, saying tariff reduction alone would not suffice to cushion the impact of rising oil prices.

"Weak government intervention in the form of tariff cuts cannot stop Shell, Caltex, Petron and new oil players from increasing their prices. They will always find ways and alibis to get away with frequent oil price hikes," said KMU spokesperson Prestoline Suyat.

"The government must seriously consider dropping the deregulation law and undertake centralized procurement efforts with regards to imported crude oil and refined petroleum products," Suyat said. *With a report from Kris Bayos*

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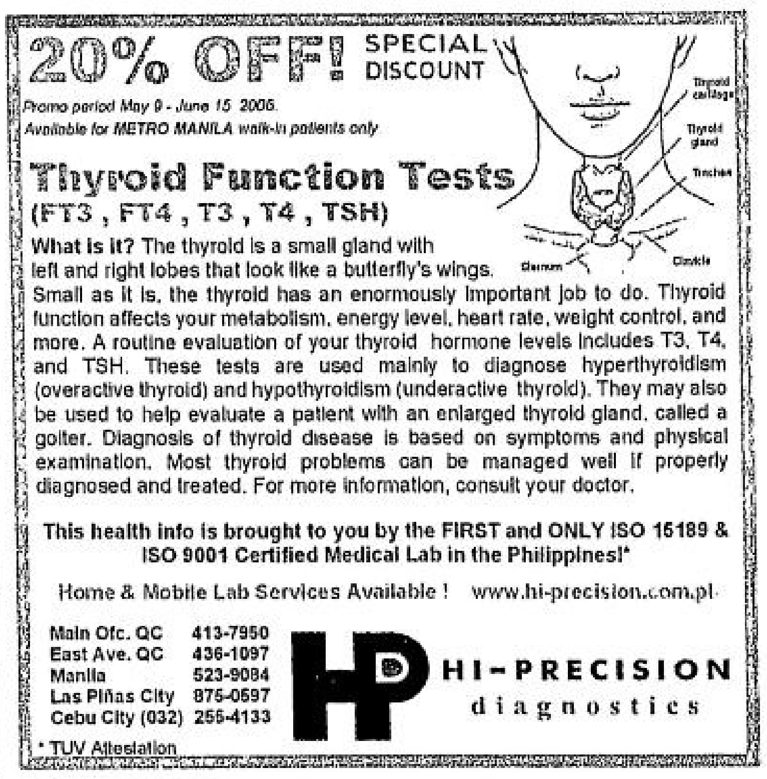
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OPINION

ISSN 0116-2642
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Vol. 21 No. 158

Email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph website: http://www.inq7.net
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The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Inc. has its business and editorial offices at
•Chino Roces Ave corner Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City
•P.O. Box 2353 Makati Central Post Office 1263 Makati City
•Our telephone numbers are 897-8808 connecting all departments
•Editorial Fax 897-4793 / 897-4794 •Advertising 897-4807
•Circulation 527-3342 / 527-3348 / 528-0183 / 528-0186 and 528-0213 / Fax: 528-02-34.
•Subscription Hotline 896-6000

Publisher **Isagani Yambot**
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Extermination

EDITORIAL

OVER A CENTURY AGO, THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE gained two words as part of the legacy of the Filipino-American War. They were "boondocks" and "amok." In the case of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, his comment that party-list representatives should "go back to the mountains" is the kind of antique thinking that keeps rebels in the boondocks, while officials in Manila like the justice secretary run amok. It would be easy to pass off Gonzalez's tartness as more of the usual, except for the fact that whatever he says partakes of official policy.

Abraham Lincoln said a nation cannot be half slave and half free and that a nation divided against itself cannot stand. The overwhelming majority of Filipinos would prefer a nation in which the rule of law prevails, and in which its component provinces aren't haunted by the specter of perpetual conflict. The last half of the 20th century up to the present has been marked by entire swathes of the country being only nominally under the control of the Republic. Where the forces of the state and of rebels contend, the only victors are poverty, banditry and the abuse of human rights.

Because no country can move forward if perpetually distracted by anti-insurgency campaigns, governments have tried, with varying degrees of success, to accomplish through negotiations what all-out war can never achieve: an end to fighting, and the start of rebuilding. Painfully, slowly, our country has learned that the politics of exclusion and persecution breeds more evils than it stamps out; and that the politics of negotiation and compromise achieves much more in terms of stability and peace.

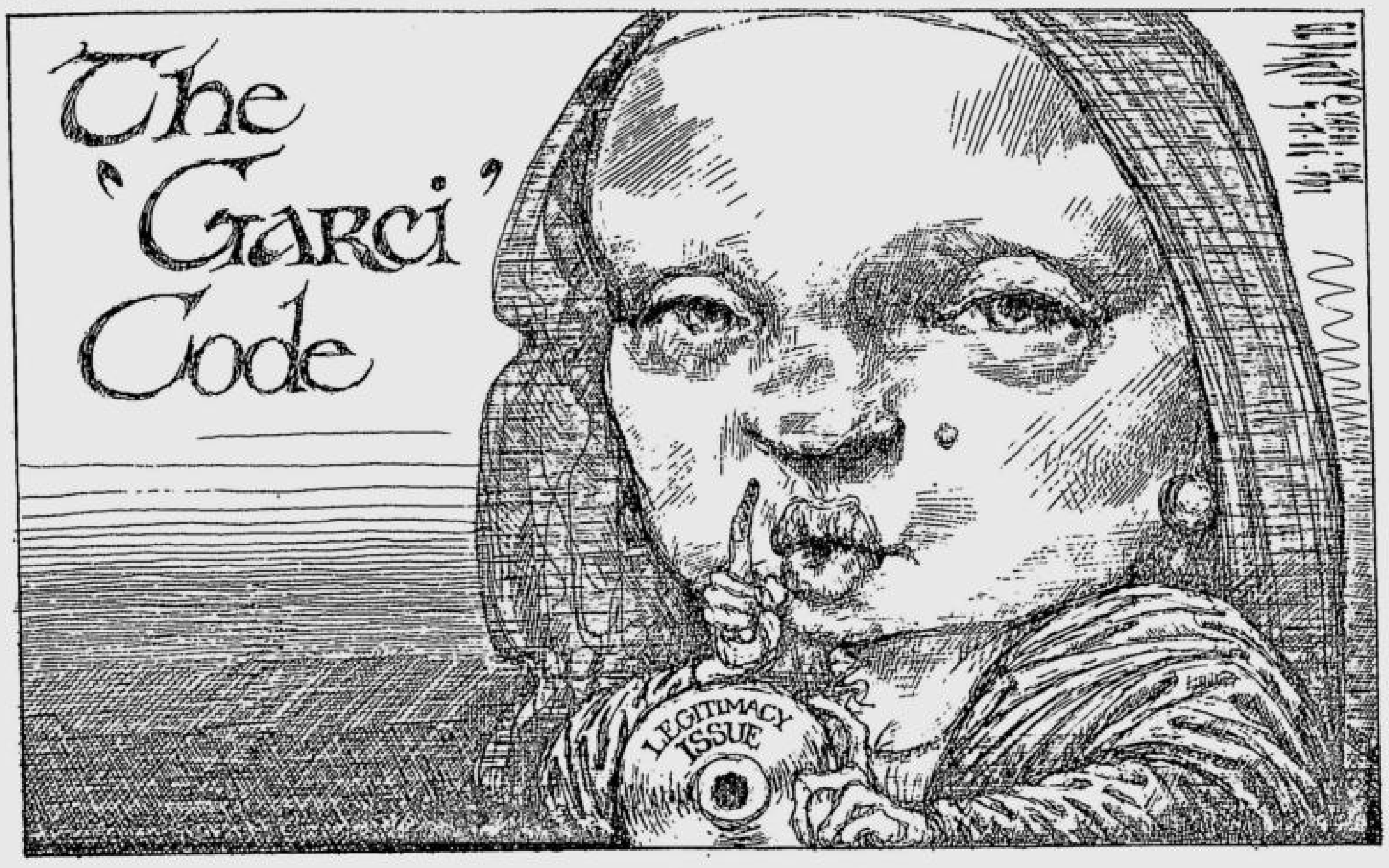
Since the Edsa Revolution, the policy of the state has been to negotiate a peace while gradually expanding the democratic space. This process reached a high point during the Ramos administration, in which a general achieved what the politicians failed to do. Since then, however, negotiations have given way to hostilities, with varying degrees of success.

However, what sets apart the Arroyo administration from previous ones (except, perhaps, the Marcos administration) is its indifference and even tacit support for extralegal solutions to the insurgency problem. Where administrations (and rebels) once used military offensives as sticks to make the carrot of negotiations more attractive, the Arroyo administration has abandoned negotiations, and half-heartedly pursued military offensives. Instead, political liquidations have become the defining characteristic of the government's attitude toward its ideological opponents.

Rhetorically, of course, President Macapagal-Arroyo and her officials condemn the assassination of leaders and organizers of the Left. Their rhetoric is accompanied by actions that speak louder than words. Military officers suspected of complicity in, if not the actual masterminding of, political killings are promoted and decorated. Elected representatives are detained without charges, or threatened with legal action so as to restrict their movements. And in reaction to a public outcry over such actions, the justice secretary's only reaction is to challenge leftists to head for the hills.

President Arroyo and Gonzalez and their enemies from the party lists won't pay the immediate price for such bloodthirsty posturing. It is the people who will. Provinces plagued by insurgency will continue to bleed, and their residents will continue to seek refuge elsewhere. No rehabilitation, much less improvement of local economies or infrastructure can take place. This serves the purposes of a government that prefers a state of conflict to peace, which might turn people's minds to the harsh realities of our national life. It serves the interests of insurgents who would stubbornly fight, even if it means reducing the mountains and then the plains to ashes.

It certainly does not serve the public good. It does nothing for democracy, and extinguishes the hope that leftists can meaningfully participate in our democratic way of life. Ideally, ideology should be voted upon in the polls. In reality, we are increasingly seeing it lead, whichever side a Filipino might be, to the grave.



Lim: Drilon will stay

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

WHAT COULD PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo and Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago have talked about on the way to and from Saudi Arabia? Before Santiago left the Philippines, she was, judging from her previous statements, still against Charter change. After coming home with President Arroyo, she is singing a different tune. She said there will be no more Senate by July when the 13th Congress convenes as a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution and shift to a parliamentary government. What could GMA have told her or offered her while on board the plane to make her change her mind?

Since GMA's economic adviser has already called for the relief of Revenue Commissioner Jose Marie Bunag for the BIR's failure to meet its collection target for April, I think the President may have promised the top BIR post to somebody very close to the senator. After all, this person used to be with the BIR and is now a presidential assistant for revenue enhancement.

GMA is so desperate to have Cha-cha before July, when it is expected that a new impeachment complaint will be filed against her, that she will promise anything just so there is a change in the form of government. That is the only way to ward off a new impeachment charge. The people's initiative train is already on the way to derailment, what with so many obstacles on the tracks, both legal and political. The last hope is a constituent assembly because a constitutional convention would take too long to save GMA from impeachment.

Oh yes, there's another way to evade impeachment: She can resign before July and call for a snap election.

* * *

A snap election seems to be also in the offing for the National Press Club which held its own elections last May 7. But instead of only one election, the NPC had two. The two competing tickets held their own separate elections last Sunday. The committee on elections created by NPC president Antonio Antonio held its election on the fourth floor of the club's building. The ticket of Alice H. Reyes of the Manila Times won there.

The competing ticket of Roy Mabasa of the Bulletin obtained a temporary restraining order from the court against the committee on election, which had disqualified ex-president Louie Logarta of the Tribune, who was unable to pay his rental debts of almost P70,000 by deadline time, and a photographer surnamed Reyes who was declared a nuisance candidate.

The Alice Reyes ticket said the TRO was defective and held an election anyway. Instead of observing the TRO it asked for, the Mabasa ticket held its own election in the parking lot after a majority of the board, most of whom were in the Mabasa ticket, created its own election committee. Expectedly, Mabasa and his ticket won there.

So now the NPC has two sets of officers. Which one is the legitimate winner? *Parang* national elections.

Reyes said her ticket is the legitimate winner. It had the roster of NPC members, while the Mabasa ticket had none.

Mabasa said he is the legitimate winner since he got more votes than Reyes. But that was because anybody could vote in the election downstairs, Reyes countered. In fact, some members who had already voted upstairs were persuaded to vote again downstairs.

That election cannot be an accurate measure of the wishes of the members. The judge hearing the case may be inclined to nullify both elections and call for a new one, this time supervised by the court.

* * *

In the Senate, there may or may not be a new president. Senate President Franklin Drilon has stated that he would honor his agreement with Sen. Manuel Villar to split the six-year term of the Senate president. He said he would resign as president by July. But that would not automatically make Villar Senate president. He would have to be elected by the 23 senators. But Villar may not be able to get the required 13 votes. He has only four sure votes.

In fact, there is no group that has the numbers to unseat Drilon. He has only five sure votes, the opposition has seven, or possibly eight, and UFOs ("unidentified flying objects") seven or six. Since no group has enough votes to elect a new president, the status quo would prevail and Drilon would remain as Senate president.

Sen. Alfredo Lim, who was a guest at the Kapihan sa Manila last Monday along with Chair Bayani Fernando of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), confirmed this division of forces in the Senate. Lim said that even assuming seven UFOs would vote for Villar with the four senators identified with him and the administration, that would add up to only 11 votes. Lim, who belongs to the opposition, said the seven opposition senators are likely vote for Drilon. That, plus the five votes Drilon controls makes 12—one vote short of the magic 13. That one vote would not be hard to get once you are almost there, Lim noted.

For his part, Fernando said that while traffic may be heavy during the opening of classes next month, the light at the end of the tunnel of Metro Manila's chaotic traffic can already be seen. He said the MMDA would plant computer chips in the windshields of all the buses with franchises for the Edsa route. With these chips, it would be easy to spot the colorum and out-of-line buses.

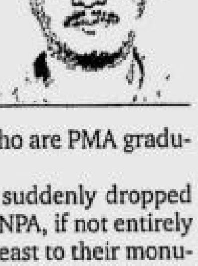
Traffic congestion on Edsa, he said, is caused by buses, only one-third full, lined up bumper-to-bumper along almost the whole length of Edsa. Many of them have franchises for provincial routes but their operators insist on plying Edsa.

They have to go back to the provinces, where there is an extreme lack of transportation, or their franchises would be cancelled, Fernando said.

Generations

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros



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‘Hinog sa pilit’

COMMENTARY

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano

"I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT," DAVID SLAPPED the banana skin on his empty plate, ruing. "It's bland like paper paste!"

"What ... it?" I asked surprised by the sudden change in his voice and the topic of our conversation over breakfast of oatmeal and fish *pinaksiw*, a combination only Filipinos can think of.

"This banana," he pointed to the sickly yellow peeling of *lacatan* on his plate. "I was afraid the whole bunch would be stolen from its trunk, so I cut it down hoping it will ripen soon enough. Now, look at the result!"

I knew all along it would end up still edible, yes, but not pleasant to the palate when he lugged it home on a wheelbarrow. It took a month before the slim fingers turned tentatively ochre in the bowels of a *kaing* covered with dry banana leaves, plastic sacks and discarded jeans. And when I finally put them on the table, we would go to the refrigerator to look for some other desserts. The bananas were *hinog sa pilit*.

We could not even offer them to our visitors or give them to departing guests as *pabaon*. The bananas were not only embarrassing to look at, they were insulting to the one you want to give it to.

Sometimes, too, around here, people resort to *hinog sa pilit* to earn some quick money. Pineapples that appear in off-season months usually get a dose of ethyl, a liquid chemical, to force fruiting and another swab on the base of each fruit to ripen it for the market. The fruit may look impressive outside, but the inside is unhealthy yellow with a "bite" in it when eaten to make us refuse second servings.

Hinog sa pilit. How like the Charter change being pushed by the administration using what it calls a "people's initiative." This I reflected on as I was taking a brisk walk on my imaginary pathways circling the house that morning. I am part of that "people" in its "people's initiative," but I cannot find any valid reason for thinking that changing the Constitution now will make life better under this dispensation. What needs changing to my mind is the composition of people holding power at present.

The ingenuousness with which President Macapagal-Arroyo and her hallelujah choir boys came out with Sigaw ng Bayan to solicit the signatures, using the government machinery and money, clearly shows that the move is not from the people but from the government. That in itself kills any creative initiatives people may have left.

As part of the *masa*, I hate the thought of being manipulated by my own government simply because I am regarded as a simpleton and in constant need so I make *kapit sa patalim*. Thus, I can be swayed to put my name on a piece of paper for a few kilos of rice, noodles and sugar. I don't want my government misinforming me that my signature can help change the entire Constitution and form of government when, in fact, the whole exercise has no legal basis for lack of an enabling law.

I am repulsed by a government that distorts facts and realities to advance its own selfish interests through my signature because it is afraid of its own shadow of shady deals, corrupt practices and questionable election into office.

I am outraged by a government that bamboozles me to obedience by martial fiats and orders and still disguise itself as a democracy.

The frenzy, the hysterical optimism, the speed with which the so-called "people's initiative" is being rammed into the consciousness of the nation is a desperate attempt by this government to make *hinog sa pilit*, a move that is altogether unripe, out of season, unreasonable, unconstitutional. And anything forced to ripen before its time, before its natural maturity arrives—pineapple or political process—comes out distasteful, disappointing, if not repulsive. *Ang hinog sa pilit ay mapakla, mapait.* Or, it could be, like in politics, explosive.

"I won't pick any fruit if it's not ripe for the picking again," my husband resolved during breakfast that morning. He stood up. "If it gets stolen, so be it."

He rummaged through the inside of the fridge for something.

I smiled to myself, remembering his words as I panted, now about to finish my daily exercise. Would PGMA allow her presidential seat to be "stolen" from her through a real people's initiative of sustained civil disobedience, perhaps? Like not paying taxes, boycotting certain products and services, OFWs withholding their money, government employees not appearing in their places of work as suggested by a columnist? It was even suggested that priests not hold Masses for the people. This is all to oppose the one up there who claims she is God-sent to be the "best leader" of our time. I really wonder how it could be.

It may not come to that. Or it may. Still, *ang hinog sa pilit ay mapakla at mapait.*

Evelyn Miranda-Feliciano is now a freelance book writer after 22 years with the Institute for Studies in Asian Church and Culture. She is also a teacher-facilitator in seminars on writing, women, culture and family life.

Catherine’s story

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

"CATHERINE" IS THE NAME GIVEN TO ONE OF four women on death row who are the subject of case studies included in "Invisible Realities, Forgotten Voices: The women in death row from a gender and rights-based perspective."

Like the 27 other women death penalty convicts at the Correctional Institute for Women (CIW) at the time the research was conducted (mid-2004), Catherine was largely invisible to society. As the study put it: "(The) death penalty is not readily associated with women offenders." This is in part because there is only one woman for every 36 men who languish on death row at the New Bilibid Prison.

But aside from bringing the stories and situation of the women to public attention, the study, said research coordinator Aida Santos, also seeks to describe the impact of their sentence on the women's self-perception and on their "significant others," especially their spouses/partners and children. From their findings, the researchers also hoped to "discuss the gender aspects of death penalty, and prison life in general." To this end, Catherine's story might prove useful in tracking the links between a woman's life experience, particularly of abuse, and the "life choices" she makes.

One of the reactors at yesterday's launch of the study, lawyer Richie Ybanes, warned against bringing up childhood physical and sexual abuse as a way of explaining why the women got into conflict with the law. "This might lead to stigmatizing survivors of abuse, not all of whom become criminals," she said.

And yet, it seems imperative nonetheless to point out how common childhood abuse figures in the life stories not just of the women on death row, but of women in prison, women survivors of abuse and other crimes, and even women in sex work.

Here's Catherine's story.

* * *

AT THE TIME the researchers met Catherine, she was one of the newest occupants of the death row dormitory, and one who didn't seem to belong there. She exuded the air and demeanor of a well-educated suburban housewife, which she was before her arrest. The fifth of eight children of a middle-class couple, she is a college graduate and quite articulate in English.

But there is more to Catherine's story than her comfortable circumstances at the time of her arrest. For some reason, Catherine's mother singled her out for abuse in childhood, something that mystified her siblings who were willing to talk with the researchers. Often, Catherine even served as a surrogate for other siblings who had done wrong and would have been meted corporal punishment.

On her 18th birthday party held at home, Catherine was spotted kissing a suitor during a dance, infuriating her mother who then and there confronted her daughter and slapped her in front of the guests. Shortly after, having been shamed publicly, Catherine decided to elope with the suitor, named Jimmy. He eventually moved into their home.

Though she got pregnant by Jimmy, the relationship didn't last. She caught him embroiled in an affair with her own sister. Still, she received little sympathy from her mother, who blamed her for "bringing a snake into the house."

* * *

IT was at this low point in her life that Catherine met Edcel, a friend of an older brother, who, though married with three children, managed to convince Catherine to cohabit with him.

Aside from her oldest child, Catherine would bear three sons and a daughter by Edcel, and live a comfortable suburban life, keeping house, bringing her children to school and fetching them, and generally centering her existence on her children and "husband."

Edcel was a good provider early on, but later would falter in his responsibilities as he got more and more involved with drugs. To make ends meet, Catherine engaged in a sideline, selling garments she got on consignment. When enrollment time came, she begged her siblings for financial help.

She also began to suspect that Edcel was getting into bad company, being visited by strangers at odd times of the day, and meeting with them secretly in a room at their home that he kept off-limits to everyone else.

One day, Catherine woke up later than usual but still managed to bring her children to school. She decided to stop by a fast-food place to pick up some hamburgers for her children. She was approaching the counter when she heard someone call out her name. It turned out to be a man she had seen with Edcel and so decided to follow him out. Once outside, Catherine was dragged to a parked car where two other men were waiting and they all demanded to know where Edcel was.

* * *

THE MEN turned out to be undercover agents and it seemed clear to Catherine that Edcel was their real target. Brought to Camp Crame, she was held without bail for nine days after she refused to sign documents shoved in front of her that would have her admitting guilt to drug possession.

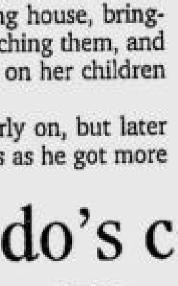
Catherine was adamant that she did not know where Edcel was (he had stopped coming home shortly before her arrest) but refused to help police locate him because she was counting on him to look after her children. Edcel was eventually arrested, and her children were parceled out to relatives, including one to Edcel's wife.

According to the researchers, Catherine claims to be still confused about why she was meted out the death penalty. When she tried to discuss legal strategy with the private lawyer her sister hired, all he told her was to "cry in front of the judge so he would take pity on you."

But the judge seemed to relish his reputation as a "Judge Bitay" (Hanging Judge) and was even bragging to his friends that after he had sentenced a woman to life, he would sentence another woman soon. "That was me," says Catherine.

Caves for Aguinaldo’s camp?

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

HERITAGE MONTH IS UNDERWAY AGAIN, AND I recently joined a tour of Bulacan organized by Bambi Harper, Mita Rufino and Chichi Salas that brought me back to Biak-na-Bato. I had gone there twice before, ages ago, with Benedict Anderson when it was reportedly swarming with NPAs. Afterwards, I took some graduate students there on a field trip as I was teaching a class on the Philippine Revolution, knowing there was no better way to make them learn than bringing them to a place where the visual aids are literally larger than life. None of us had come prepared to trek all the way to the "Bat Cave," also known as "Bahay Paniki." Worse, we did not know that we needed swim wear. So I put my wallet in a plastic bag and waded waist deep in the water just to get an idea of what Emilio Aguinaldo and his men had to go through. It was an experience none of us will easily forget.

I was informed that there is a very long cave or tunnel with water that is worth exploring. I'm hoping that either Environment Secretary Angelo Reyes (because the area is a DENR-protected nature reserve) or Bulacan Gov. Josie de la Cruz will provide me with a guide and a banca so I can see whether these caves were worth hiding in during the Philippine Revolution of 1896.

When you look at the map, Biak-na-Bato is very close to Manila and you may wonder why Aguinaldo took refuge there. But when you make the trip today in a car and on uneven roads, you will understand why. The mountain range is beautiful and the area is still practically uninhabited today, so a century and 10 years ago, this was a suitable place for hiding.

The Heritage group from Manila had been given only 15 minutes in Biak-na Bato, so we went through the paved concrete trail to the mouth of one cave. The guide said this was where Aguinaldo hid in 1896. Everyone tried to peer inside but could not see through the dark and we wondered why he would hide in a dark and damp cave.

Photos of Aguinaldo's camp in Biak-na-bato show that they had huts made of bamboo and thatch. We have to determine where this used to be located instead of perpetuating the legend that Aguinaldo and company hid in the labyrinth of caves. After one visit to Biak-na-Bato, common sense will tell you that nobody lived in the caves for extended periods, but then as I keep reminding my students, "common sense is not common."

There are a number of primary sources on Biak-na-bato and, of course, the most fantastic of these is the book by Pedro Alejandro Paterno who described his arrival there as follows:

"We reached the pinnacle of Biyak-na-Bato crowned with huts that housed the troops and the people who sought refuge on its slopes. It was eleven in the evening. The nocturnal birds sang and whistled in the virgin forest. Somehow or the other, some lights flickered inside the already quiet huts.

"Hurriedly and without losing a moment, we directed our steps to the hut occupied by the Filipino chief and his wife. "Don Emilio Aguinaldo received me affectionately and lodged me in his dwelling hut. It was so miserable and narrow. He and his wife were not using this as their room but they were sleeping on the *papag*.

"They gave me a small room in which I had to draw my feet together. The sister of Aguinaldo, Neneng, a very hardworking lady, the sort of proud and virile type, yet affable and loving, together with her aged mother were in charge of giving me lodging. They kept me warm from the intense cold. They gave me pieces of paper and a soldier's clothes—the only things available. All was done for God and peace. I fixed myself the best way I could. I tried to sleep, preparing my plans for the conference the next day since I would have to be an arbiter on the subject of peace, but it was impossible to sleep.

"There was a continuous neighing of horses and buzzing of insects that molest and bite. Finally I opened my eyes and seemed to fly, fly and fly to the monorhythmic sound of the black and stringent hawks and kalaws, of the dismal tictic, of the owls and sabucots of the virgin forest. They protested in continuous and mournful savage cries over the encroachment of man, the *guerilleros* who were disturbing their eternal calm and paradisiacal tranquility."

Reading this is a bit difficult not only because of the florid run-around style that we do not employ in English, but in 19th-century Spanish that is how that generation sounded. Paterno painted a very pretty picture of this virgin forest, and I wonder if all the birds he mentioned are still there today. The entrance to the reserve is now filled with little stalls selling souvenirs, soft drinks and snacks. On the trail, you will meet children asking for money or candy. The place is still quite beautiful and during the summer, it can be a very refreshing swimming hole with the cool mountain water cascading through the rocks that literally are split open, hence "biak-na-bato."

Re-reading the sources now makes me wonder about the flat stone formation that people claim was Aguinaldo's table, and if the cave where it can be found was Aguinaldo's headquarters. Sorry to disappoint the tourism people, but none of the sources mentions the caves—only a camp with makeshift houses. Definitely this requires more research.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Summer’s rituals

THE WEEKEND TYPHOON REMINDED US THAT SUMMER may be ending soon, which means time is running out for that ritual of passage of *pagtutuli* or male circumcision.

I've written in the past about this practice, mainly to point out that its medical basis has come under question. The American Academy of Pediatrics, for example, issued a statement in 1999 saying the health benefits of the practice "are not compelling enough."

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

You should have seen the angry feedback I got from readers—mainly men—whenever I did a column questioning the need for circumcision. "It's cleaner" was the most common argument, to which I'd say that you can be circumcised and still be quite, uh, sloppy.

Others argued that circumcision was needed to produce children. To which I would respond that circumcision is not practiced in mainland China so how come we now have more than a billion Chinese? (A side story: Some angry readers asked if I had been cut and I'd say, with a bit of dramatic flair, yes I've been mutilated, as with most Chinese-Filipinos.)

‘Supot’

Another popular Filipino belief is that circumcision is needed, around puberty, to spur growth.

I should share a little story here to refute that argument. Many years ago, the NGO I worked with got a Dutch volunteer agriculturist, Michiel, assigned to us. He arrived shortly before summer and promptly noticed all the free circumcision missions being offered. When he asked about this one time, over lunch, the NGO staff explained that an uncircumcised boy would end up *bansot* or with stunted growth.

Michiel mustered all his Tagalog to protest: "*Hindi yan totoo.*" (That's not true.) The staff broke out in hysterical laughter, realizing Michiel, who was like 6 feet 3 inches, was, as most Dutch go, uncut. And yet the Dutch are said to be the tallest people on earth. Really now, if circumcision produces tall people, why do we still have to import basketball players, some of whom are probably *supot*.

Supot. Paper bag. Let's face it, we drag our sons to get circumcised to save them from ostracism. The term "supot" stigmatizes people for life, marking them as poor lovers and poor basketball players (not only are they shorter, they're also said to be poor shots). The word is even used to insult people, as in a sign I saw the other week posted on a wall as a warning: "*Supot lang ang umiihi dito.*" (Only the uncircumcised will pee here.)

The worst is when someone *supot* passes and naughty friends wrinkle their noses, claiming the poor hygiene wafts through.

HIV/AIDS

Some readers are probably now itching to tell me, hey, what about all these reports now that circumcision can prevent HIV/AIDS.

We need to be a tad careful here. Yes, it's true: medical researchers have found that there generally seems to be fewer HIV infections in countries where circumcision is practiced. In Asia, the lower infection rates have been noted in the "cut league" of countries, which includes the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia (yes, circumcision is part of our pre-colonial Muslim heritage).

Generally, the studies seem to suggest some "protective" effect from circumcision, not just for males but for their female partners. The reduced risk isn't just for HIV/AIDS. In a paper issued last month, the US Agency for International Development noted that circumcision has been known to "greatly reduce a man's risk of penile cancer . . . and it also reduces risk of some other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including chancroid, herpes and syphilis. It eliminates problems such as phimosis (narrow foreskin opening) and balanitis (infected foreskin), and has been shown to significantly reduce the risk of cervical cancer among female partners of circumcised men."

How does this protective effect work? It's interesting that the anti-circumcision camp has argued that uncircumcised males experience more sexual pleasure because the extra skin is sensitive, but now the pro-circumcision camp says the foreskin actually has more "target cells" that attract infectious microorganisms like HIV. The foreskin is also said to be more susceptible to tears and abrasions, which means easier infection by HIV and other microorganisms causing STDs.

No magic bullet

Where does this leave us now? USAID is careful in saying "MC" (sigh, Americans probably gave Filipinos this love for acronyms) is not a "magic bullet" and that it "it will not provide full protection against HIV." Rather wryly, USAID also points out that circumcision "will provide little or no protection against urethral STDs such as gonorrhea and Chlamydia [known locally as *tulo*] and obviously will not prevent unwanted pregnancies."

It's important then to keep repeating that just because Filipinos are "cut" does not mean we're immune from HIV. The HIV epidemic in the Philippines, previously described as "low and slow," is now considered to be "hidden and growing" so we need to continue to be vigilant and to promote a package of prevention methods, including condoms.

USAID, in fact, warns that there may be a need to have programs of behavioral "disinhibition" among circumcised males who might return to high-risk behavior thinking they're adequately protected by circumcision.

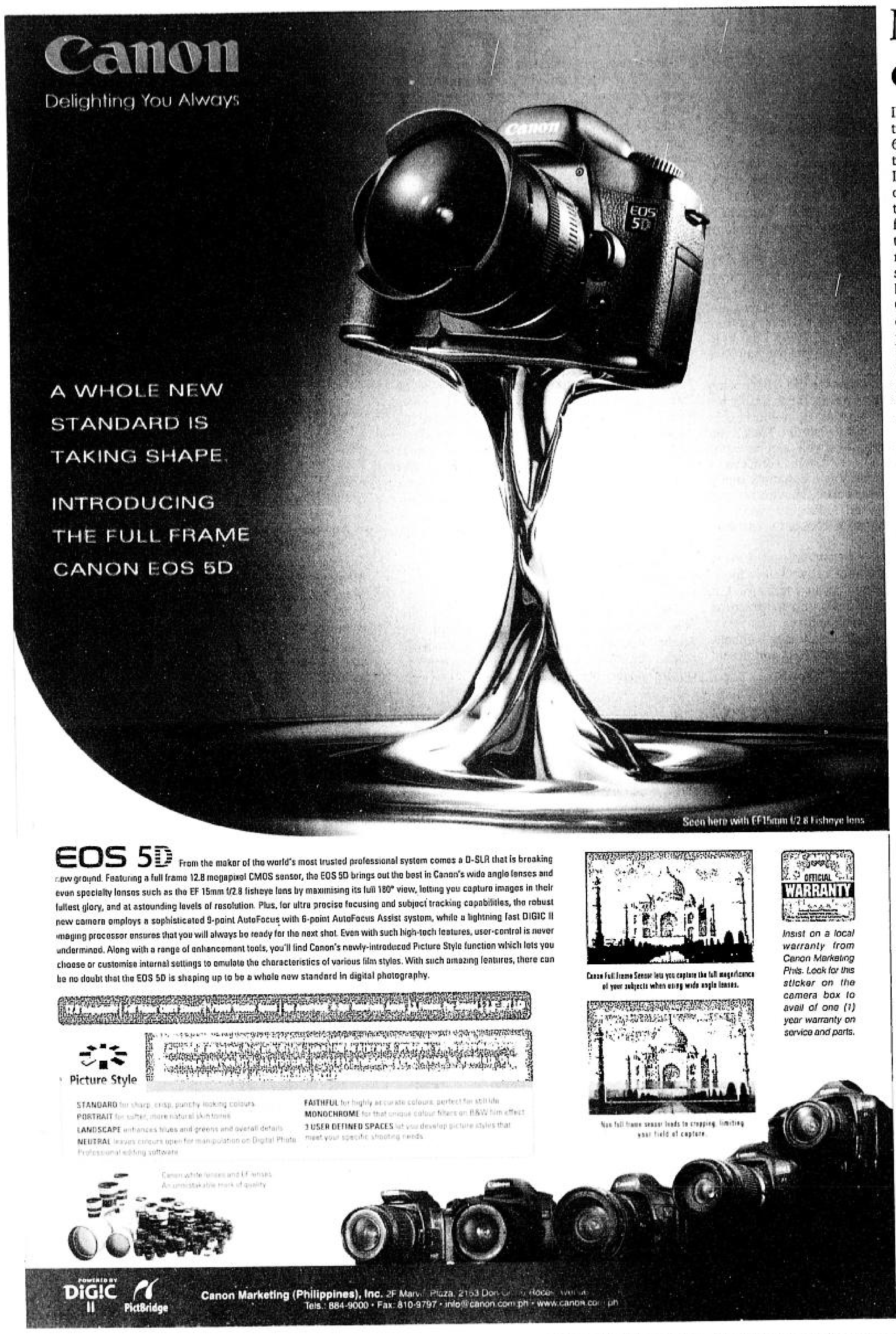
Since circumcision is already being practiced here, I'd go a step further and look at how we might want to borrow from a program in Kenya, where circumcision, which is practiced as a traditional ritual, now integrates preventive health education.

In the Philippines, circumcision is only one of summer's rituals of passage. It used to be that after young men had recovered from circumcision, their older male relatives would bring them to a brothel for their "binyag," a second more profane form of baptism.

Times have changed and we should be rethinking these rituals. Circumcision may be a good time to explain that the passage from boyhood to manhood isn't just a matter of being brave during the cutting ritual, or of going off to conquer women in brothels.

There is a folk belief that the circumcised male should "protect" his wares from the female gaze, lest this swell and redden like tomatoes. That belief could well be used to explain that manhood is a matter of learning to be responsible and of respecting women.

Tomato metaphors aside, I've found in the Philippines that it's especially useful to remind young men to see, in every woman, their own mother or sister. That kind of thinking may yet be a more effective preventive action against HIV/AIDS and STDs than circumcision.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Making a scapegoat out of the Charter

IN REPORTING THAT IN 2005 the Philippines ranked 49th out of 61 countries in global competitiveness, the Switzerland-based Institute for Management Development did not say that among the causes of this deplorable performance is our present Constitution or some of its provisions. ("RP rates poorly in competitiveness survey," PDI, 5/12/06) In fact, Mia Denopol, project manager for Global Competitiveness Program, cited as reason the Philippines' poor ratings in education, health, research and development, infrastructure, credit rating, political instability, corruption, brain drain, weak civil service and poor governance.

Neither have foreign institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank blamed the present Constitution for our extreme poverty and dismal economic performance. Yet the Arroyo administration and her Charter change advocacy groups, including Sigaw Ng Bayan, continue to proclaim ad nauseam that what's wrong with our country is our Constitution.

It is obvious that the Arroyo administration is making the Constitution a scapegoat for its failure to improve the economy and stop the spread of hunger, sickness, etc. In its obsession to stay in power, the Arroyo administration seeks to acquire legitimacy through a dubious plebiscite and chooses to turn a blind eye on the real problems of our country.

MANUEL F. ALMARIO
mfalmario@yahoo.com

Morality play on Marcos wealth

THE INQUIRER'S APRIL 30 EDItorial asked: Has the Presidential Commission on Good Government lost completely its sense of right and wrong?

PCGG Chair Camilo Sabio "defied" the senators in that legislative hearing precisely because his sense of right and wrong told him that they could be fishing for something—for anything—they could pillory President Macapagal-Arroyo with. It was wrong for the senators to turn budget hearings into opportunities for head-bashing, it was right for Sabio to shield the President from legislative malevolence now gone customary. If anything, a solid sense of right and wrong marked the refusal of Sabio to answer questions dipped in malice, notwithstanding proud lions roaring.

The editorial likewise accused me of "going around town proudly trumpeting" my exploratory talks with the Marcoses. I was, of course, being transparent, informing the public from the very start what was going on. "Proudly trumpeting" was the preferred semantics, in keeping with your chosen slant.

While journalistic license might allow newspapers unlimited latitude in labeling anything, they must always be right with their facts.

The INQUIRER was dead wrong in claiming there were "talks with the Marcoses for a 70-30 sharing." There are exploratory talks, there will be sharing one way or the other, but no one is talking about 70-30.

I bet the INQUIRER quoted the astonishing Eddie Gil—with triumphal glee—when he said he would pay off our national debt with his own money if he should win the presidential elections of 2004. The editorial took me to task for likewise quoting Imelda, who happened to have made the same offer. The INQUIRER is free to quote others, PCGG commissioners had better watch out—that apparently, is its take on the matter.

On the report that I said "I don't care about the moral issues involved," instead of demonstrating how the INQUIRER quoted me out of context, let me just remind the newspaper that in its passionate fight for press freedom, it avers pretty much the same thing: "We will give media space to coup plotters and other so-called destabilizers so they can be heard by the public in the free marketplace of ideas. We don't care about the moral issues involved."

Indeed, when a newspaper raises up a mirror to the world, that mirror can only be an unusually amoral one—not immoral, mind you, but amoral. There should be occasions when bracketing morality could be a most proper moral act.

Lastly, the INQUIRER selectively quoted the 1998 Supreme Court decision on one particular compromise agreement to suit its purposes. The manner in which it quoted and interpreted that ruling has been self-serving and deceitful as any legal mind trained in reading court decisions will readily affirm. Now that's one moral issue for the newspaper.

—RICARDO ABCEDE,
commissioner,
Presidential Commission
on Good Government,
IRC Bldg., 82 Edsa
Mandaluyong City

Commissioner Abcede admits everything. We rest our case.—Ed.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Wednesday May 17, 2006

Who will be next? Find out here on your Philippine Idol Network
American Idol
Wed-Thurs-Fri 10pm
ABC
Iba Tayo!
ClickTheCity.com

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5				National Geographic	PBA				Sentro	PBA					Big News	American Idol			Insider
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema			Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World		Bituing Walang Ningning	Sa Piling Mo	Pinoy Big Brother	Panday	Wonderful Life	S.O.C.O			
AXN		CSI: NY (Season 2)		The World's Scariest Explosions Caught On Tape		The Amazing Race (Season IX)		The 4400 (Season 2)		Pensacola (Season III)		30 Seconds To Fame	Samsung Sports World	Maximum Exposure (Season I)		CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (Season 6)		CSI: Miami (Season II)	
Cartoon Network	Police Academy	Richie Rich	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Codename: Kids Next Door	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	The Simpsons		Power Rangers Wild Force	PokeMon	Yu-Gi-Oh Double Duel		The Simpsons		Mucha Lucha!	Duck Dodgers	Justice League	Samurai Jack
Cinema One		Tatlong Tapang Walang Diyos				Magkano Ang Iyong Dangal?				Uno			Persona	Kailan Sasabihing Mahal Kita				Secrets Of Pura	
Cinemax		Indiscreet			Evening [illegible] (4:45 PM)				Somebody Has To Shoot The Picture			Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot			Running Against Time (9:25 PM)			Implanted (10:55 PM)	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		Cold Case		Law & Order Special Victims Unit		Profiler		Forensic Files	I, Detective	Law & Order		Law & Order Special Victims Unit		Proof Of Life				Bones	
Discovery Channel		Blueprint For Disaster		American Chopper		Stealth Secrets		Billion Dollar Disasters		Wild Discovery		Hour China		Kapow! Superhero Science		In The Eye Of The Storm		World's Strangest UFO Stories	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/[illegible]	Mickey Mouseworks	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Ducktales The Movie: Treasure Of The Lost Lamp			American Dragon	Buzz on Maggie	Kim Possible	Totally Spies	Halloweentown High	
ESPN		Pro Billiards '04, Sudden Death 7-Ball NV USA		Pool/Snooker World Pool Masters '04 Holland		World Tenpin Masters '05		Table Tennis '05 [illegible]	In The Driver's Seat	Pool/Snooker World Pool League '04 Poland		Pool/Snooker World Pool League '04 Poland		Sportscenter Asia	Classic Boxing: R. Duran vs. V. Pazienza II		Classic Boxing: At The Games		Sportscenter Asia
ETC		Will & Grace 4	Friends 10	Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		Veronica Mars 2		Beach Girls		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Cold Turkey		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
EWTN	St. Thomas More Faithful Statesman	Chaplet Of Mercy/ Angelus	Faith In Motion	Truth in The Heart	Rosary With Mother Angelica	EWTN Gallery	Suffering And The Love Of God	EWTN Catholic Classic	The Church & The Poor Building Bridges	Mother Angelica Live Classics		Daily Mass Live		Holy Land Rosary/ Angelus	One In Their Hearts: Witness Of Priesthood	Parable	Rome Reports	EWTN Presents	
Fox News		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live					
GMA 7	Agawin Mo Man Ang Langit	Now and Forever (3:15 PM)	Snow White Sweet Love		Saiyuki	Dragonball Z	Gokusen	24 Oras		Extra Challenge	Majika	Love Of The Condor Heroes		Jewel In The Palace		Mars Entertainment			Saksi
Hallmark Channel		McLeod's Daughters IV		Crimson (4:05 PM)				Bewitched	The Nanny	Judging Amy		Sue Thomas: F.B. Eye II		Judging Amy		Mary & Tim			Judging Amy (11:45PM)
HBO				Shrek 2			The Bonfires Of The Vanities				Alien Siege			Breakin' All The Rules			Eraser		
Hero TV	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer	Tokyo Underground	Metal Fighter Miku	Beyblade G-Revolution	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Naruto	Memo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr. Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Angelic Layer
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	TV Infomercial		Japan Video Topics		ME TV		PTA Best Of The Philippines		Up Close And Personal	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman		Hunt		Velocity		X-Men	Street Smarts	Mad TV		That 70s Show	My Name Is Earl	The Late Show David Letterman		The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Premium Blend	Primetime Glick	Chappelle Show
Lifestyle Network		30 Minute Meals	Wolfgang Puck	Sweet Dreams	Smart Solutions	Sensible Chic	Decorating Cents	Bill Boggs Corner Table	Unwrapped	Food 911	E! Entertainment Special		Style Star	Martha		Fine Living Special		Intimate Portrait	
MTV Philippines		Laguna Beach		MTV Screen	Pop Inc		MTV Hits (with SMS)			Get Spotted	Fall Out Boy MAV: [illegible]	MTV Screen	MTV Summer Moments	TRL		Laguna Beach		MTV Summer Grind	MTV Free Ride
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYXILOG	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYX Live!		Urban MYX	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXILOG
National Geographic	Wildlife Diary	Nat'l Geographic Specials: Koala Quandary		Hidden Worlds: Beauty Of Paradise			Planet Wild	Top 5: World's Great Rain Forests, Monsters of the Forest		WOW! Elephants of Kilimanjaro		[illegible]		Nat'l Geographic Specials: [illegible] Moments 1 & 2		Sounds From Disaster: Mount St. Helen Eruption		Is It Real? Monsters of the Deep	
NBN		Teledyaryo Alas-Tres		Teledyaryo Sports [illegible]	Dyos Ko, Mahal Ko Ba Siya?	Teledyaryo W/ Ben Tulfo & Angelique Lazo		Tinig ng Bayan (Live)				Teledyaryo Final Edition				Balita OCW With Susan K			
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	Hey Arnold!	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo!	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures of Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			[illegible] Isa Ang Puso				Ang Akusado				[illegible] ang Bukas				Oo Na, Sige Na				Ilusyon
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin		Zipang	Kaleido Star	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Magic Ring	Irene	Noel	Project 11	Now Na!		News On Q	Balitaan		Irene	Over The Green Fields
RPN 9						Global Window	RPN Aksyon News	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	NBA Semis/ Conference Finals						Newswatch Now	Cargo For Truth		Kerygma
SBN 21				New Life TV Shopping				Winner TV Shopping		Quantum Global		Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		SBN Music Video			
Solar Sports										Sagupaan							Solar Sports Desk		
Sports Plus	Inside the PGA	Arena Football: Tampa Bay @ Nashville						FIFA Preview Series 13	Wild Side	NBA Playoffs Conf. Semis Games					NASCAR Dodge Charger 500 Darlington				
Star Movies				Soul Assassin (4:15 PM)			Mighty Joe Young				Trump Unauthorized			Urban Legends Final Cut			Never Say Never Again		
Star World		The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		American Idol		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	American Idol Beauty And The Geek		Grey's Anatomy		Smallville/The Apprentice (Series 4)		Seinfeld	American Idol Beauty And The Geek
Studio 23	Bewitched	YuGi-Oh 3 & 4				Batman Beyond	Xiaolin Showdown	Spirits	Pinoy Big Brother	Wazzup Wazzup	World's Craziest Videos		CSI (8:20 PM)	24 Season 4 (9:10 PM)		News Central	Oprah		Just Shoot Me

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6 out of 10 cops don't own homes

CAMP OLIVAS, PAMPANGA—SOME 73,000, OR 62 percent, of policemen in the country do not have houses and lots of their own.

"They either rent or live with their relatives," said Deputy Director General Oscar Calderon, PNP deputy chief for administration and chair of the PNP housing board.

Calderon said the PNP had tapped the Gawad Kalinga to help ease the housing problem among policemen and their families. It launched on Monday in Tarlac City the first of 48 areas for the "Pulis Kalinga" program.

Gawad Kalinga has helped build thousands of decent and affordable homes in poor urban and rural communities, mobilizing the labor and financial contributions of private individuals and corporations as well as public agencies.

Gawad Kalinga founder Tony Meloto joined Vice President Noli de Castro, concurrent chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, in Monday's capsule-laying rites in a 62-hectare housing site in Barangay Macabulos.

At least 200 policemen assigned to various stations in Central Luzon will initially benefit from the project.

Calderon said Tarlac Rep. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III pledged P3.2 million to the project. The money would come from the lawmaker's countryside development fund.

Local governments in Tarlac, Calderon said, committed to pay for the costs of renting construction equipment.

Each single detached, 20-square meter unit costs P60,000.

Calderon said Gawad Kalinga agreed to shoulder half of the amount. Policemen would pay the other half through a loan from the government-owned Pag-Ibig Fund.

De Castro urged policemen to cherish "with the same fervor" the housing privilege given them by the government and the private sector.

He said that while government was prioritizing the housing needs of squatters, such as those living along the right-of-way of the PNR North and South lines, the housing sector was also focusing on the same needs of the government sector, particularly the low-salaried employees.

Under the Institutional Housing Program of the government, priority is given to teachers, soldiers, policemen, and LGU employees.

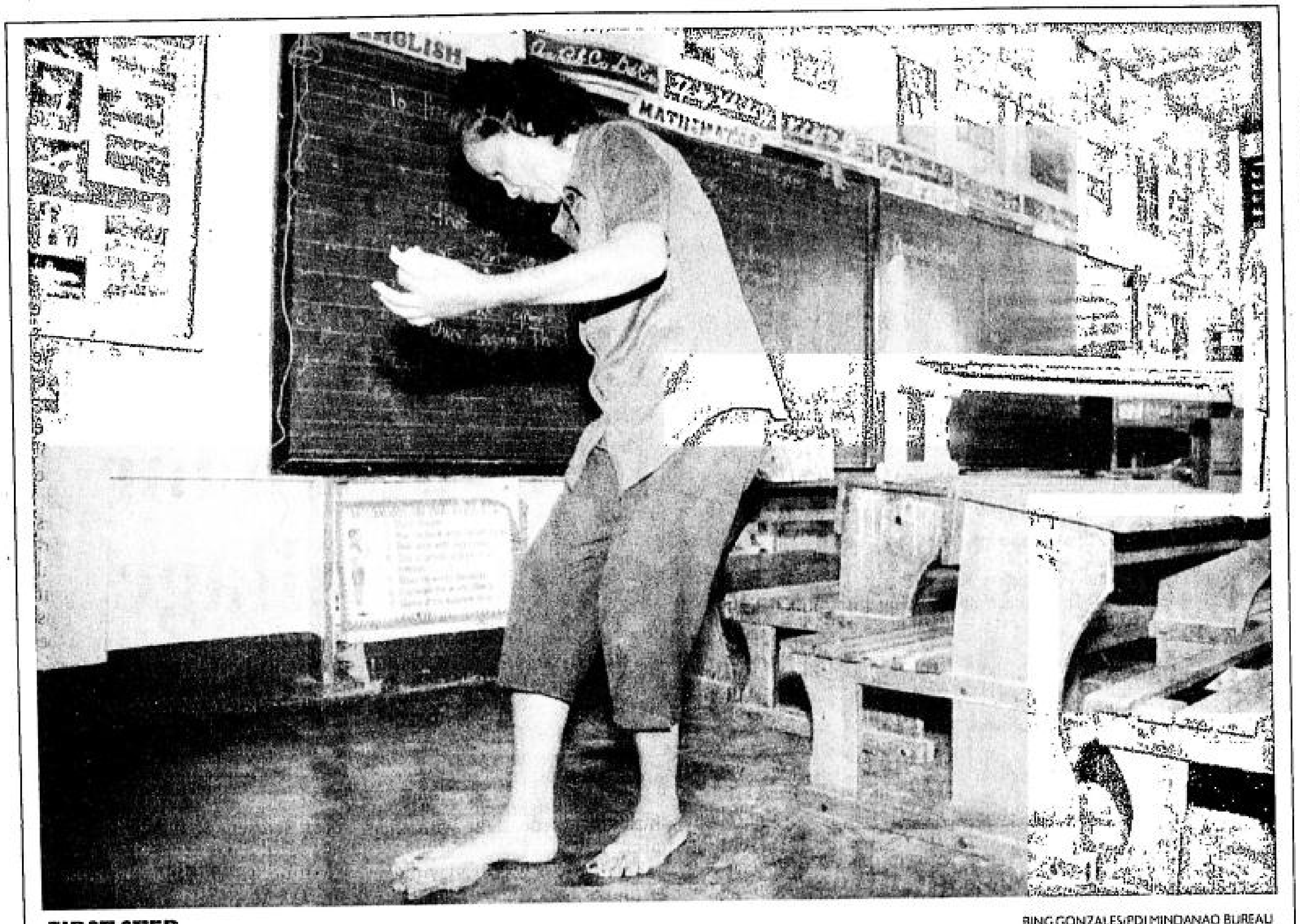
"That is why you should treasure this benefit. If there are requirements needed, let's work on it. If there are payments to be made, let's pay them. That is all for your family," said De Castro.

De Castro said the housing project for policemen was a concept of the PNP, through its personnel housing assistance program, with the help of the Gawad Kalinga.

The construction of 50 housing units will be sponsored by the Gawad Kalinga, in cooperation with the local government of Tarlac, the PNP and the National Housing Authority.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines Savings and Loans Association Inc. (AFPSLAI) will donate P6 million for the construction of 200 more housing units that would cost P60,000 per unit. Also, an additional P30,000 per beneficiary would be available from the Public Safety Mutual Benefit Financial Institution (PSMBFI).

De Castro also lauded non-government organizations (NGOs), such as the Gawad Kalinga, which have been giving assistance to the government in building shelters for squatters. *Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk and Cynthia Balana in Manila*



BING GONZALES/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

FIRST STEP
A teacher starts cleaning her classroom at the Piedad Central Elementary School in Toril, Davao City in preparation for class opening next month.

ROUNDUP

Smuggled Korean cars held

DAVAO CITY—Customs authorities here on Thursday opened two container vans and found smuggled Korean cars. Sigmund Barte, inventory officer of the Bureau of Customs, said they seized the containers in January on suspicion their contents were not properly declared. He said the shipper declared the contents of the containers as auto parts. Barte said after the seizure, the BOC contacted the consignee, Bungs One Auto Supply, but its owners disowned the shipment. Barte said when it was opened on Thursday, they found three KIA Sportage vehicles and a Hyundai van. *Dennis Jay Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Symposium on disabilities

THE FIRST Southern Tagalog Symposium on Developmental Disabilities will be held on Thursday and Friday at the Bellevue Manila in Filinvest Corporate City, Alabang, Muntinulupa City. Hosted by the First Steps Intervention and Therapy Center, Inc. based in Nayong Maharlika, Calamba City and held in cooperation with the Alpha Angelicum Academy of Biñan, Laguna, the symposium will tackle the issue "AD/HD: Multidimensional and Mustidisciplinary Issues and Perspectives." For inquiries, call (049) 545-6479 or 0928-422-6117, or e-mail firststeps_itc@yahoo.com.

Hospital donates medicines

COTABATO CITY—A private hospital based in Tokyo, Japan has offered over P3 million worth of medicines for Muslim communities in war-torn areas in Mindanao. The donation will be used for medical missions in the provinces of Basilan, Davao Oriental, Lanao del Norte, Sultan Kudarat and Zamboanga del Sur by the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), the designated development arm of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Officials said the medicines were provided by Tokushukai Medical Corp., the largest chain of privately owned hospitals in Japan. The first leg of the medical mission was held in Sapad, Matanog on May 10. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Albay seeks IRA recovery

LEGAZPI CITY—Provincial board member Ramon Fernandez Jr. has initiated a move to recover Albay's share in the P17.5 billion Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) withheld by the national government under ex-President Ramos in 2000 to 2001. Following the Supreme Court ruling that declared the IRA cut unconstitutional, Fernandez filed a resolution authorizing Gov. Fernando Gonzalez to enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) seeking the release of the IRA through the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) without the need for another appropriation in the national budget. *Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

6 dead in truck collision

PAGADIAN CITY—At least six people died and four others injured when two trucks collided along the national highway in Aurora, Zamboanga del Sur on early Sunday. Zamboanga del Sur police chief Supt. Ramon Ochotorena said the fatalities were aboard a Pagadian-bound six-wheeler Elf truck that crashed into a 10-wheeler soft drinks cargo truck in Barangay Anonang around 7 a.m. Ochotorena said the Elf truck tried to overtake another vehicle before colliding with the cargo truck on the opposite lane. "The six-wheeler truck turned turtle before ramming a parked tricycle," he said.

Ochotorena said the driver and three passengers of the 10-wheeler truck were seriously injured and were immediately brought to the Aurora General Hospital.

Aurora police chief Chief Inspector Robert Bahian said they had difficulty retrieving the dead bodies because these were trapped by the crumpled metal parts of the ill-fated vehicle. Bahian said they had to use acetylene torches to retrieve the mangled bodies of the victims, all of them male. *Michael Sarcauga, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

7 more added to 'Caloy' death toll in Sorsogon

SEVEN MORE PEOPLE DIED IN Sorsogon in the wake of tropical storm "Caloy," authorities said, as the government of Oriental Mindoro placed the province in a state of calamity.

Police said five fishermen from Bagatao Island in Magallanes, Sorsogon were confirmed dead. Two were found dead in Sta. Magdalena town, some 70 km southwest of Sorsogon City.

Caesar Tallada, Oriental Mindoro provincial disaster coordinating council official, said 24,207 families were affected by the typhoon.

He said the hardest hit town was Pinamalayan where more than 1,200 families were moved to evacuation centers.

Almost 500 families are in evacuation centers in Calapan, he said.

He said the provincial council gave Gov. Arnan Panaligan permission to use the province's P10 million calamity fund.

The storm destroyed at least P50 million in crops, said Tallada, but the destruction could be worth much more as reports come in.

At least 1,500 houses were destroyed while 2,000 others suffered damages.

Power was restored in some parts of Calapan but the rest of the province is still without electricity.

Tallada said it would take at least a week to restore power.

He said most of the roads have been cleared and are now open to motorists.

Batangas City and the coastal towns of Tingloy and Mabini have declared a state of calamity in their areas.

Armando Duque, director of the Office of Civil Defense in Calabarzon, said at least P150 million in infrastructure and crops were destroyed in Batangas.

Members of the Badjao and Dumagat tribes were moved to the city's public market and the Libho Elementary School.

Mabini town in Batangas reported losses of P168 million.

The two dead in Barangay Biton in Sta. Magdalena, Sorsogon were trying to salvage their fishing boat when they were battered by strong winds and waves, authorities said.

Sta. Magdalena Mayor Alejandro Gamos reported to the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) that at least P3.5 million in crops were destroyed in his town.

Noel Pura, PDCC action officer, asked other mayors in Sorsogon to submit reports to the council for compilation and record-keeping. These, he said, would be submitted to the regional disaster coordinating council and the national disaster coordinating council. *Marlon Ramos, Bobby Labalan and Ephraim Aguilar, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Court stops signature verification process

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr. and Felipe V. Celino
PDI Visayas Bureau

ROXAS CITY—OPPONENTS OF moves to amend the Constitution have scored a major victory after a Capiz court barred Commission on Election (Comelec) officials from verifying collected signatures of registered voters for a people's initiative.

In a two-page order released on May 15, Judge Edward Contreras, of the Roxas City Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 17, issued a preliminary prohibitory injunction against the Comelec director in Western Visayas and officials of the poll body in Capiz.

The order effectively prevents the election officials from proceeding with the authentication of signatures indefinitely or until the main case, the petition for prohibition, is resolved.

Contreras issued the preliminary injunction after the lapse of a 20-day temporary restraining order that he issued last April 25.

Citing the importance of the case, Contreras exempted the petitioner from paying the injunction bond.

Opponents of the initiative lauded the court decision.

"This is a major victory for those seeking to block these self-serving and malicious moves to amend the Constitution," said Hope Hervilla, regional coordinator of the party-list group Bayan Muna.

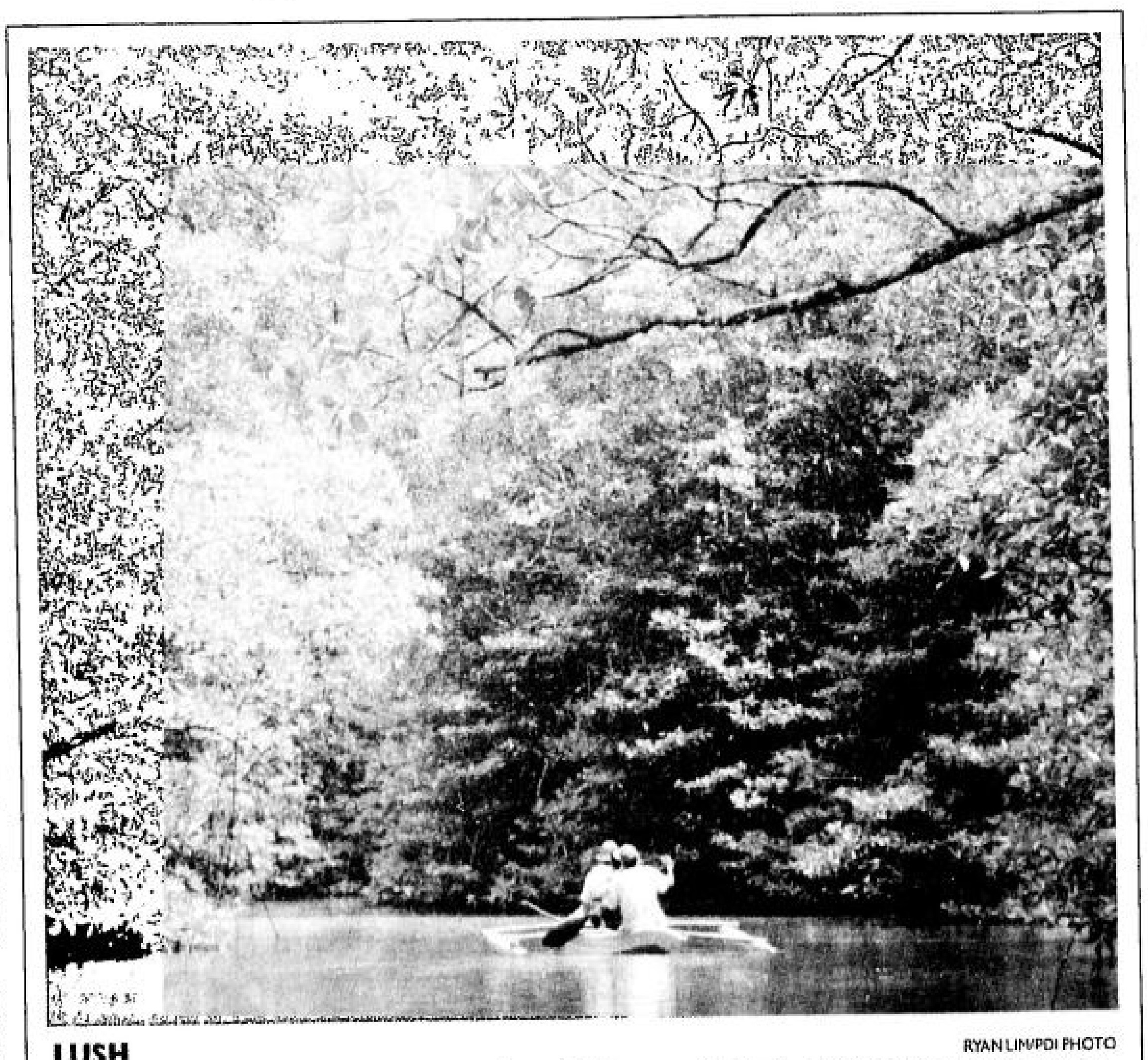
In his order, Contreras said the preliminary prohibitory injunction was necessary "in the interest of justice and fair play and in order not to render ineffectual the judgment in the main case of prohibition."

Contreras also said in his order that the petitioner was entitled to the injunction based on evidence and arguments presented by both sides.

The lone petitioner, former Roxas City councilor Rey Antonio Jose Altavas, accused the Comelec officials of violating the March 1997 Supreme Court ruling "Santiago vs Comelec."

The decision ruled that Republic Act 6735, or the Initiative and Referendum Act of 1989, lacks an enabling law to support a people's initiative to amend the Charter.

The respondents argued that the petitioner should have first availed of administrative remedies with the Comelec before filing the case in the RTC.



RYAN LIM/PDI PHOTO

LUSH
Lush vegetation awaits visitors to the mangrove forest of Sabang near the Bambua Nature Park Resort in Palawan.

Cagayan town mayor nabbed for murder

TUGUEGARAO CITY—POLICE ON Monday arrested a Cagayan mayor charged with double murder last year, on the strength of a warrant issued by a Manila judge.

Senior Supt. James Andres Melad, Cagayan police director, said Buguey Mayor Licerio Antiporda Jr. was taken to Metro Manila to face charges involving the murder of lawyer Franklin Tamargo and his daughter, Franciel Gail, in Manila last year.

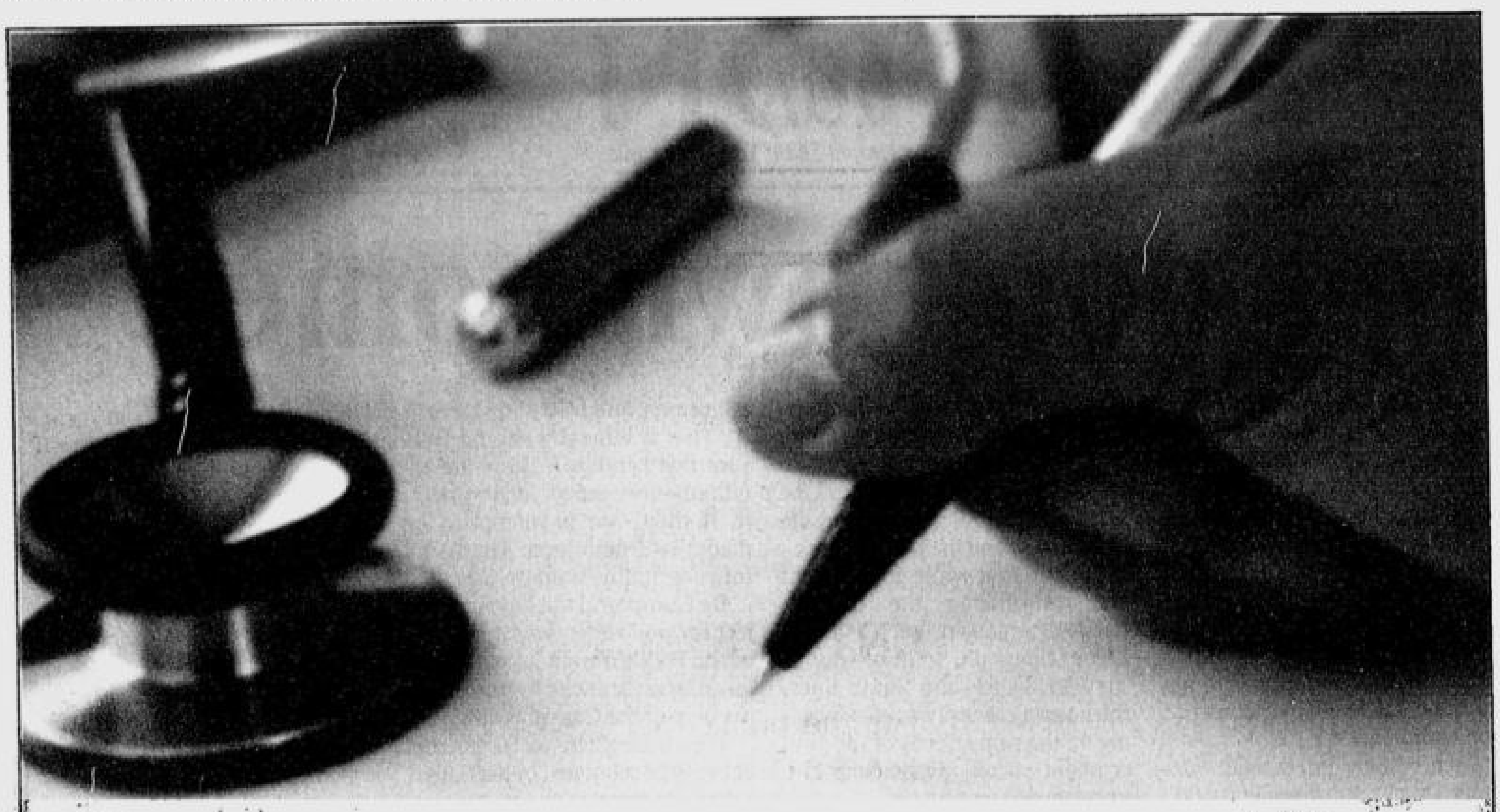
Antiporda was arrested on the strength of a warrant issued by Judge Zenaida Daguna of the Manila regional trial court, Melad said.

He said Antiporda did not resist arrest.

The mayor's son, Buguey Vice Mayor Lloyd Antiporda, who was also implicated in the killings, is at large.

Melad has allowed two police teams led by Senior Insp. Romeo Mangwag, Buguey police chief, to escort the police convoy that took Antiporda to Metro Manila.

Melad ordered Mangwag to send a security team to the Buguey town hall to defuse any tension that might result from the arrest of Antiporda. *Villamor Visaya Jr., PDI N. Luzon Bureau*



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5. Entry must be submitted to MEDICard Philippines, Inc. 9/F World Center Bldg., Sen. Gil Puyat Ave, Makati City 1209 by May 30, 2006 to qualify. Submission of entries may be through any of the following means:

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The entry should be delivered to MEDICard Philippines, Inc. 9/F World Center Bldg., Sen. Gil Puyat Ave, Makati City 1209 by May 30, 2006, to qualify. The entry should be enclosed in a short brown envelope with the words "MEDICard Essay Writing Contest/Philippine Daily Inquirer" prominently written in front.

b.Mail
The entry should be mailed to MEDICard Philippines, Inc. 9/F World Center Bldg., Sen. Gil Puyat Ave, Makati City 1209. The entry should have a postmark dated May 25, 2006 or earlier and should reach the MEDICard office by June 3, 2006 to qualify. The words "MEDICard Essay Writing Contest/Philippine Daily Inquirer" should be prominently written at the back.

c.E-mail
The entry must be e-mailed to essays@medicardphils.com by May 30, 2006 to qualify. The subject must indicate "Essay Writing Contest-Philippine Daily Inquirer".

6. Entrants may choose any of the following topics:
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c. Third prize
One year free MEDICard membership**
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8. Winners will be announced on the June 9, 2006 issue of Philippine Daily Inquirer.

* Total prizes for all winners
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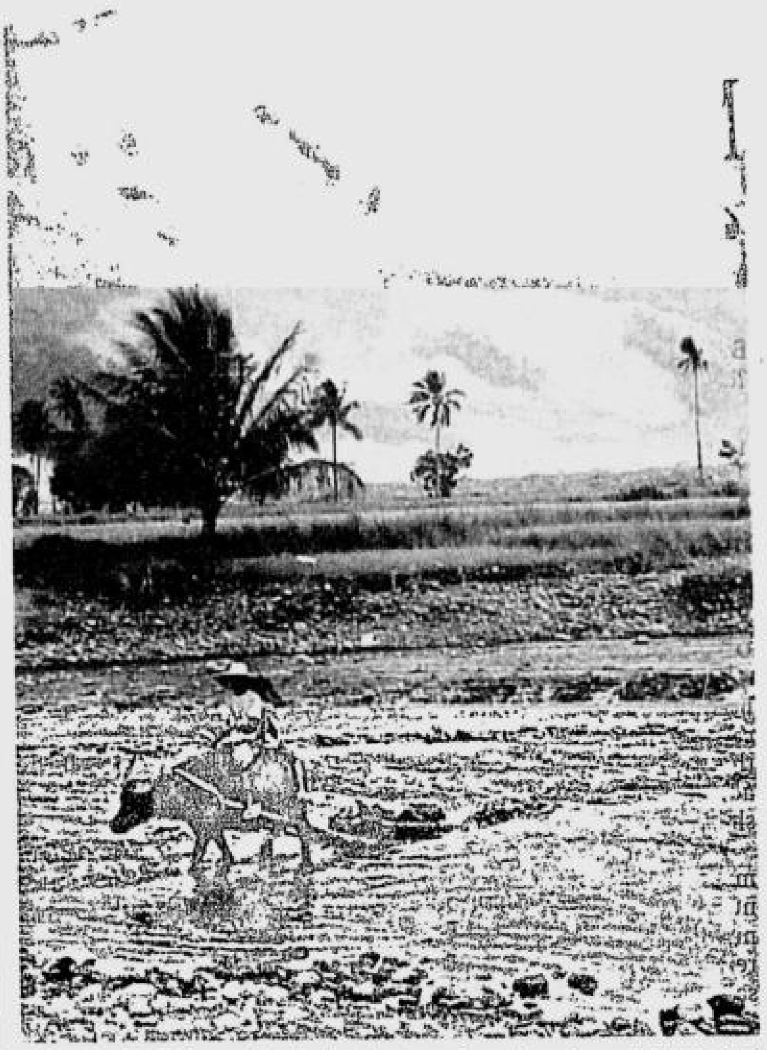

GUINSAUGON, now buried under tons of mud, rocks and debris, has drawn the sympathy of donors from various countries, including Filipino immigrants in the United States.
PDI PHOTO

Donations keep pouring in for buried village

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

PALO, LEYTE—Financial assistance for victims of the massive landslide in Barangay Guinsaugon, St. Bernard town in Southern Leyte keeps pouring in.

A US-based Filipino organization yesterday handed two checks amounting to $10,500 (roughly P535,500) to the Department of Education in Eastern Visayas based here for its Project Guinsaugon: Tabang Kabataan.

The project was designed to address the immediate needs of students who survived the Feb. 17 landslide which covered the village of about 1,000 people with mud and boulders.

Flor Velasco Villania, one of the trustees of the Waray-Waray Association of Tidewater (WWT) based in Virginia Beach, Virginia, handed checks worth $6,000 from the Mission of Mercy (MoM) and $4,000 from the Council of Filipino Organizations of Tidewater (Cufot) to DepEd Regional Assistant Director Alberto Escobarte and project coordinator Rebecca Ragrag.

The WWT is part of the Cufot. Villania was asked by the MoM to personally hand their donation to the DepEd officials.

The donations were expected to benefit 103 students, 18 of whom would be entering college. The other students are in the elementary and high school levels.

Leo Dizon, 17, one of the beneficiaries, said he was happy that the government and private groups were not getting tired of helping the children of Guinsaugon.

"I will always be grateful to them. Now, I can be assured that somehow I can finish my college education," he told the INQUIRER.

Dizon completed his high school education in March at the Tambis National High School in St. Bernard. He plans to take maritime courses because he wanted to become a seafarer.

He lost his mother Jocelyn and five siblings, including his 3-month-old brother, in the tragedy. The DepEd took him in for a summer job, which ended Monday.

Villania, a native of Palo, Leyte, said they were swept with sadness upon learning what happened to Guinsaugon. They decided to think of ways of helping the victims.

On April 22, the WWT sent five boxes containing used clothing and canned goods through the Streetlight Philippines, a charitable organization based in Tacloban City.

Villania said the financial assistance extended by the group and the MoM was meant to help the student-survivors so they could finish education and have "normal and productive lives."

"Thank goodness, there were also responsive, generous people who wanted to do the same. That is why this was realized," Villania said.

She said another $4,000 would be donated soon to Project Guinsaugon by the Cufot "pending positive feedback on their initial donation" and $8,000 was also allocated by the Mission of Mercy to be used for the construction of two school buildings.

Escobarte and Ragrag gave assurance that the donations would be used in accordance with the project's objectives.

"Everything will be accounted for," Escobarte said.

The DepEd has received over P800,000 from different organizations and individuals since the project was launched on March 9.

The donations were deposited in the Land Bank of the Philippines.

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INQUIRER Northern Luzon

Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Meet Tarlac's 'Calendar King'

By Russell Arador
Tarlac City

BATUANG holding a copy of the century calendar RUSSELL ARADOR

JEEPNEY DRIVER Efren Batuang of Barangay Carangian in Tarlac City was in Grade 4 when he stopped going to school because of poverty.

Despite his lack of education, he can perform mathematical calculations in his head so fast that he can put an engineer, an accountant or a math teacher to shame.

Batuang, for example, can mentally multiply a three-digit number by another three-digit number, churning out the correct answer even before you can say, "I give up."

The catch, however, is that he can do the mind-boggling feat only if the multiplicand is 365. Why? It is the total number of days in a year and thus a "calendar number," said Batuang, who can also perform a host of other tricks involving the Gregorian calendar.

For his unique talent, Batuang, now 64, is called the "Calendar King" by friends, relatives and neighbors.

Among other things, Tatang Efren, as this father of nine is fondly called, can give the name of the week on which a particular date falls.

In a heartbeat, he can also count the number of days from Jan. 1, 1901 up to any given date within the 20th century.

Before the INQUIRER visited Batuang, we randomly selected "April 19, 1980," "Oct. 29, 1985" and "June 19, 1983." To determine the day of the week on which these dates fell, we used the date settings program of Windows XP.

When shown these dates, Batuang, without using a reference, correctly and promptly answered Saturday, Tuesday and Sunday.

Simply put, just tell him your birth date and he will know in a second what day of the week you were born.

That was easy, he said. Indeed, he had many other more difficult tricks up his sleeve.

As another example, given only the numerical day, the year and the day of the week, he can tell the month or months in which this particular date belongs.

Calendar tricks

For instance, if shown the following information—24, Thursday, 1966—he will very quickly identify the months of February, March and November. This means that in 1966 only February, March and November had the 24th day falling on a Thursday.

Batuang said it was towards the end of the 1970s when, as a jeepney driver in Metro Manila, he met a college student who amused his friends with his calendar tricks.

His interest piqued, he began to study the numbers, dates and other pieces of information in the calendar.

It did not take long for him to realize that what the college guy was doing—identifying the day of the week based on a complete date—was simple. In fact, he said, it was the simplest calendar trick.

But he learned this the hard way.

In the 1990s, he auditioned to join a "Calendar King" contest sponsored by a national television network.

"I was asked to name the day of the week for a number of dates. Very quickly, I was able to do it. But the young man in charge of interviewing me simply told me I did not make it. I asked him why. He said I was slow and that was it," Batuang said.

The rejection did not discourage him, though. On the contrary, it spurred him to develop better and more difficult techniques. "*Lalo akong nagpursigi* (I tried harder)," he said.

Table

Batuang also invented a system to translate all the information in a calendar into numbers and arrange these into a table.

The table, he added, was not much different from a calendar, except that it contained only numbers. No names of weeks or months, only numbers.

Each time he would answer a question posed before him, he would simply visualize the table of numbers he had constructed.

What Batuang was able to create was impressive not only because it worked but also because it was made by someone whose math training did not go beyond the four basic operations in arithmetic—addition, subtraction, multiplication and division.

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Team from OIC to check peace pact enforcement

DUREZA

COTABATO CITY—A 16-MEMBER DELEGATION from the influential Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) will arrive in the country today to assess the implementation of the 1996 final peace agreement between the government and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), a Malacañang official announced yesterday.

Jesus Dureza, national peace adviser, said the OIC team would be flying to Mindanao tomorrow and would be visiting the cities of Marawi, Cotabato and Davao, as well as the provinces of North Cotabato and Sulu.

It was expected to complete its task by Saturday.

Dureza said the government was confident that the OIC team would find the implementation of the peace agreement in order.

Historic event

"The visit is truly another historic event as we continue to keep track of the full implementation of the government's commitments in the GRP-MNLF peace agreement," Dureza said.

He said the visit was "timely and relevant as it sets an encouraging mode in the ongoing negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)."

The visit is also seen as a boost to the government's bid for an observer status with the OIC, the 57-member pan-Islamic body that includes oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

But Eid Kabalu, MILF spokesperson, said the government's bid faces rough sailing because Saudi Arabia itself opposed the inclusion of the Philippines into the grouping.

Observer seat

During President Macapagal-Arroyo's recent visit to the oil rich country, she asked King Abdullah to help the country win in its bid for an observer seat, which the MNLF continues to hold.

Kabalu did not specify where the MILF information come from but added that aside from Saudi Arabia, Malaysia is also opposed to the Philippines' bid.

If Kabalu's claim is true, then the country's bid could fail according to political analysts here.

Saudi Arabia holds the presidency of the OIC's Committee of the Eight, which oversees the 1996 peace agreement.

The committee also includes Brunei, Malaysia, Senegal, Somalia, Libya, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Another candidate

Kabalu said that even the MILF, which has also been seeking an observer seat in the OIC, was opposed to the government's bid.

"We have asked the OIC to put it on hold first because the peace talks are going on," he said.

Dureza refused to comment on Kabalu's claim.

"I will check on it first. It's so difficult to give statements on sensitive issues," he said.

Kabalu also accused the government of not fully implementing its 1996 agreement with the MNLF.

He cited the complaints aired by senior MNLF leaders in the past, including MNLF chair Nur Misuari.

Misuari is in jail following a failed uprising by his disgruntled followers in Sulu and Zamboanga that killed more than 100 people. *Jeoffrey Maitem and Jeffrey Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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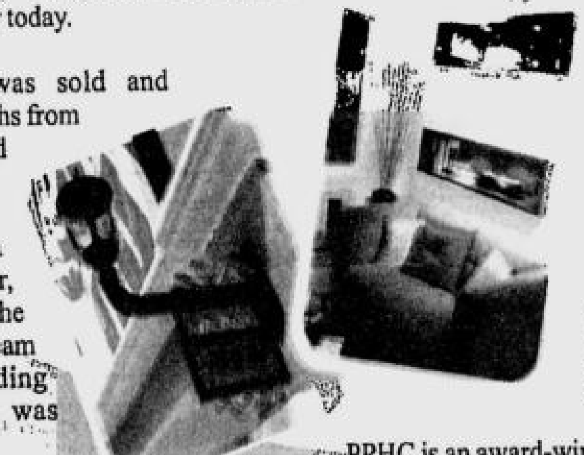
PHINMA Property Holdings Corporation Inaugurates Italian-Inspired Community

After completing the fastest-selling affordable development in Metro Manila, PHINMA Property Holdings Corporation (PPHC) inaugurates its Spazio Bernardo project in Quezon City today.

The 1.6-hectare property was sold and delivered in less than nine months from mobilization. It was launched September last year and the first batch of buyers started moving into the first Villa of a 116 units just three months after, making it in time to spend the New Year in their new dream home. With PPHC's building system, Spazio Bernardo was completed in record time without sacrificing structural integrity and quality.

Spazio Bernardo is an Italian-inspired medium-rise condominium development near Mindanao Avenue in Quezon City just 8 minutes away from the MRT EDSA North terminal. It is composed of 957 units in 11 buildings called Villas. Spazio is the Italian word for "place" or "space". Rightfully so, Spazio Bernardo is a residential enclave in the city amidst charming landscaped gardens.

It is a community setting that is affordable and accessible to major malls, schools, hospitals, government institutions, parks and other commercial centers. Its location allows its residents to be close to their place of work, experience reduced travel time and spend more quality time with their families.

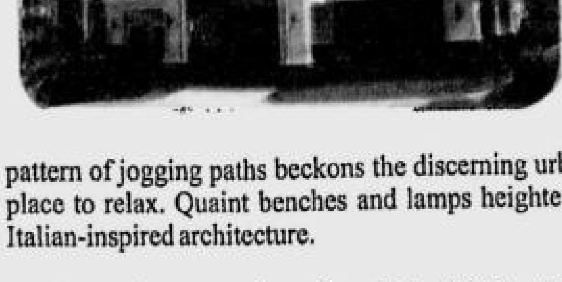


Despite being sold for as low as P640,800.00 for a spacious 30-sqm. unit, Spazio Bernardo offers features that are not typical of projects in this price level. Each unit comes with Australian aluminum windows, vinyl floor tiles on self-leveling concrete, prepainted walls and ceiling, tiled toilet and bath, under kitchen cabinets and drying cages in the attic.

Spazio Bernardo also owes its success to the partnership with government. HUDCC under the leadership of its Chairman and Philippine Vice President Noli L. De Castro, Pag-IBIG Fund under its President and CEO, Atty. Federico Romero S. Quimbo and to its joint development partner, the Quezon City LGU headed by Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Jr. This partnership has helped make decent and quality homes within the reach of the Filipino family.

PPHC is an award-winning and leading developer of affordable medium-rise housing in Metro Manila and Spazio Bernardo stands as its contribution to the PHINMA Group's 50th anniversary this year. Bannered by its slogan "City Living Made Easy", PPHC communities are perfect for those who have set their sights on making their home in Metro Manila, close to their place of work. PPHC's projects are specially designed to be owned at a very affordable price and driven ever forward by its belief that Life Can Be Better for the Filipino.

Spazio Bernardo's il Palazetto Beckons



With Spazio Bernardo completed in record time, PHINMA Property Holdings Corporation (PPHC) formally opens the doors of il Palazetto, the main clubhouse that offers its residents a place to socialize, relax and workout amidst the newly completed community.

Il Palazetto is centrally located within the landscaped quadrangle of the 1.6 hectare development. As you step into its entrance porch, the high sloping ceiling lends airiness and a feel of simple pleasures. It is perfect for social functions and has a spillover area to a beautifully landscaped park. The park's free flowing pattern of jogging paths beckons the discerning urbanite to soak in the lush greenery and offers residents a place to relax. Quaint benches and lamps heighten the charm of the amenities area and complement the Italian-inspired architecture.

For those who want to keep fit and trim, il Palazetto also offers a gym where residents can do their workout routines. Rounding out the activities for the family, the amenities area features a playground where children can enjoy the day in a safe and secure surrounding. Il Palazetto and the park balance the concept of condominium lifestyle in the metropolis by making the community a complete urban refuge.

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Senate, House OK dialogue on Cha-cha

From page A1

and widespread opposition from civic, religious and business groups, the administration in the past several weeks has begun raising the possibility of transforming the Senate and the House of Representatives into a constituent assembly that will revise the Constitution.

The Senate has refused to support either the people's initiative or the constituent assembly. The House believes that it could overcome the Senate opposition if the two chambers vote to convene themselves into a constituent assembly. The Senate believes this can only happen if the two houses, voting separately, approve the proposal.

If the House insists on its interpretation of the Constitution on the second mode of amending the Charter voting as one unit, the Senate says it will contest this before the Supreme Court.

'Nothing will happen'

The Gordon-Jaraula dialogue was proposed by Speaker Jose de Venecia to break the impasse.

"We agreed to sit down and dialogue ... but whether or not we will proceed with Charter change is another thing altogether," said Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan.

"Whether or not such a dialogue will lead to a Con-ass (constitutional assembly) or to Cha-cha (Charter change) is something that remains to be seen."

Sen. Joker Arroyo said the dialogue would be nothing but "*bolahan*," or fooling around.

"Nothing will happen to that dialogue because the issues are so complicated," Arroyo said.

The Supreme Court will be the one to resolve the issue of whether the Senate and the House should vote as one or separately, Arroyo said.

Breakthrough

But Sen. Edgardo Angara, who supports the President's initiative, said the dialogue was a "tremendous breakthrough for constitutional change."

"So far, there has been a retrogressive and war-like stance on either side," Angara said. "At least now, the barrier has been brought down considerably."

Malacañang and administration allies said yesterday's meeting saw the restoration of "diplomatic ties," as well as "goodwill," not only between the two branches but between the two legislative chambers after months of bickering over political controversies hounding Ms Arroyo.

11 priority bills

The meeting agreed to push 11 priority bills in the remaining session days.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye later told reporters that the 11 measures included the 2006 national budget, the antiterror bill, the bio-ethanol bill, tax relief for low-income workers, the rationalization of fiscal incentives, antismuggling bill, the bill on the Bases Conversion Development Authority ecozones incentives, the Tourism Policy Act, the creation of the Credit Information Bureau, the automated election system bill, and the bill extending Agricultural Competitive Enhancement.

Bunye said the major accomplishment was the deal on the Charter change dialogue. "We're very happy that both houses agreed to send their respective committee chairmen to this meeting and we're looking forward to a very productive dialogue."

Ms Arroyo's political adviser, Gabriel Claudio, said the senators who attended the meeting were open to some amendments to the 1987 Constitution but that what they were objecting to was the procedure suggested by the House that it could convene the constituent assembly without the Senate.

Meeting to iron out kinks

Jaraula, who attended Bunye's briefing, said he and Gordon agreed to start meeting today "in good faith" to "iron out kinks in the approaches available toward Charter change and, primarily, to agree first to what things are doable and what can be agreed on."

Gordon said that among the issues that the two committees would tackle was the question of "appropriate timing" to hold discussions on the proposal to convene Congress into a constituent assembly "or if we are going to meet as a constituent assembly."

"After we have gone with the rules, (we can tackle) what are the amendments that we can agree on," he said.

Asked whether he meant the Senate had now agreed with the House to convene Congress into a constituent assembly, Gordon said: "No, we only agreed to meet as committees to find out what are the things we can agree upon and then move on after that."

Senate has not softened

Asked whether the dialogue managed to break the impasse between the Senate and the House regarding Charter change, Gordon said: "It breaks the name calling, the backbiting, and we can start talking again in terms of what we can do and that's important, that's a big, big push."

In an interview with Senate reporters later, Drilon denied that the senators had "softened" on the issue of Charter change. It was Malacañang, he said, that had backtracked.

Drilon said Ms Arroyo did not refer to the people's initiative during the meeting.

He said the President had apparently accepted the Senate's position that such an initiative was "patently illegal" because of the lack of an enabling law for its implementation.

Speaker De Venecia denied that the administration was abandoning the people's initiative.

"We will respect the decision and momentum of the non-government organizations and the Ulap (Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines) in pushing the people's initiative which has generated almost 9 million votes, way in excess of (the required) 3 percent in each congressional district and 12 percent nationwide," he said. *With reports from Michael Lim Ubac and TJ Burgonio*

'Da Vinci Code' for adults only…

From page A1

is directed by Oscar Best Director Ron Howard and topbills Oscar Best Actor Tom Hanks.

The movie is based on the best-selling novel by Dan Brown which "chronicles a murder investigation that could uncover a secret that has been protected since the days of Christ."

The R-18 rating for "Da Vinci" is surprising, according to a source in Columbia Pictures, the Philippine office of Sony Pictures Releasing International, producer of "Da Vinci."

Filipino employees of Columbia Pictures are not allowed by its head office in the United States to speak to the media. The Columbia source spoke to THE INQUIRER on the condition of anonymity.

"We will not appeal the R-18 rating because it might get an X on its second screening," the source said.

An R-18 rating, however, would mean that it will not be shown in SM malls nationwide because of the cineplex's ban on adult-themed films.

SM has a huge chunk of the movie market, 40 to 50 percent of the ticket sales, according to Macie Imperial, director for acquisitions and marketing of Sky Films, which released the award-winning film "Brokeback Mountain" in the Philippines.

Ang Lee's "Brokeback Mountain" also received an R-18 from the MTRCB and, as such, was not shown in SM cinemas.

Earlier, Columbia sent the INQUIRER an official statement that stated that "Da Vinci" earned "favorable ratings" in countries with large Catholic populations. It was "classified appropriate for children" in Poland (89.8 percent Catholic), France (88 percent), Belgium (75 percent) and Slovakia (68.9 percent), as well as in China, Japan, Romania, Finland, Norway, Israel, Czech Republic and Turkey.

"Da Vinci" was given a PG-13 in the United States and an R-rating in Singapore and Spain.

'Mature discernment'

In the committee report, the MTRCB members explained that they found that the movie's "thematic, verbal and visual content … requires mature discernment."

The committee that reviewed the film consisted of journalist Edmund Sicam, academician Betty Molina and lawyer Eric Mallonga. The screening was held in the Columbia Pictures office in Manila yesterday at 9 a.m. and the result was released by two in the afternoon of the same day.

"We allow screenings outside of the MTRCB office for sensitive films," board chair Marissa Laguardia explained. "The distributor requests exclusive screenings for security reasons, to prevent piracy."

According to Laguardia, she sat through the "two-hour screening, as an observer, meaning I cannot overturn the committee's decision."

Laguardia shared her personal views on the film in a phone interview with the INQUIRER yesterday: "It will not sway the [Catholic] beliefs I've held since childhood. It's a suspense-thriller, a work of fiction. It only aims to entertain."

Film is balanced

In any case, Laguardia described the movie "as balanced ... In the end, Tom Hanks' character had uplifting [lines of] dialogue. He said that 'Jesus is a human inspiration … an extraordinary man … and what matters is what you believe in.'"

Laguardia opined that the film would open a healthy debate, "a discussion on what is true and fictitious. I believe it was explained well in the film. Still, that requires an audience above 18. Only a mature mind can discern, determine and separate fact from fiction."

The committee report echoed Laguardia's sentiments: "Minors, who are highly impressionable, should not be allowed … because of the thematic issues raised on the divinity and celibacy of Jesus Christ and the inner workings of the Catholic Church."

However, the film "didn't merit an X rating because it doesn't constitute a clear, express or direct attack on the Catholic Church or religion … arguments are tackled within an academic discourse or theoretical context by the movie's characters."

No SM mall shows

Imperial told the INQUIRER: "Brokeback earned a lot of money throughout its four-week run in theaters like Robinsons, but we could have doubled our box-office grosses if only we had SM, which comprises almost 50 percent of the market."

In spite of the SM ban, the distributor "ordered 70 prints of 'Da Vinci,' the biggest number of prints we've requested in three decades," according to the Columbia source.

"Columbia will just have more screenings and more theaters in other cineplexes, to compensate for SM's nonparticipation," said the source. "We will open as scheduled on May 18."

Ric Camaligan, first vice president of SM Leisure Inc. which operates SM Cinemas, confirmed that SM would stand by its R-18 ban. "We will not show it."

SM, in fact, pulled out the movie's trailers and posters while waiting for the MTRCB's decision.

A work of art

Columbia's official statement, however, stated that "the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) already went on record that it would not take steps to censor or block the showing of the movie in local theaters."

The statement quoted Msgr. Pedro Quitorio, CBCP spokesperson, as saying "the bishops view 'Da Vinci' as a work of art and not of science or history, so they do not see it as a threat to the teachings of the Church. If the faith of the people is strong, it would not be destroyed by one novel (or movie)."

In the same statement Sony Pictures spokesperson Jim Kennedy was quoted as saying: "Many religious leaders, including the Opus Dei, agree that the release of the film can provide a unique opportunity to educate people about their work and beliefs."

In fact, Opus Dei spokesperson Joey Magalona commented in the same Columbia statement: "The more you hide it, the more people will look for it … [what's needed is] parental guidance so when doubts (among the young) arise, you can fix them right away."

No environmental …

From page A1

cused a leading environmentalist of being "a major violator of environmental laws."

Lagman said Gina Lopez, executive director of the ABS-CBN Foundation Inc. and a vocal critic of the housing project, had no environmental clearance certificate (ECC) to show for the construction and operation of an ecopark at the La Mesa reservoir.

He said this meant that the ecopark of Bantay Kalikasan, a project of the ABS-CBN Foundation, had "no guarantee" that it had put in place "mitigating measures" to protect the watershed area.

'Not required'

But in a text message from Africa, Lopez said two former environment secretaries, Elisea Gozun and Michael Defensor, as well as a former director of the Environmental Management Bureau, Sixto Tolentino, had advised Bantay Kalikasan that an ECC was "not required."

Lopez said Lagman was trying to divert attention away from the "main issue," which was the danger that the housing project posed to Metro Manila's water supply.

'Grave dilemma'

"The principal critic of the housing project is a major violator of environmental laws," Lagman, a legal adviser of the 1,411 beneficiaries of the proposed housing project, said in a privilege speech at the House on Monday.

He pointed out that Lopez was opposing the building of "low-cost houses for lowly retirees" of the old National Waterworks and Sewerage Administration (Nawasa) which had been delayed for four decades.

And yet, he said, the retirees had "undertaken not to start development without first securing an ECC" and had "committed to implement all required engineering mitigating measures to foreclose any contamination of the La Mesa reservoir."

The Nawasa was the precursor of the present Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS).

"This is the grave dilemma of the poor and disadvantaged who are invariably pushed against the wall while the high and mighty get what they want with inordinate ease," Lagman said.

He said Arnulfo Hernandez, Metro Manila regional director of the EMB, certified on Monday that the ecopark "had not been granted an ECC … nor had an application been filed with us."

A check with the Laguna Lake Development Authority also showed that it had not issued an ECC to the ecopark.

Human activity

Lagman said the absence of an ECC was "significant" considering that the La Mesa Ecopark was drawing "thousands of visitors who swim, fish, bike, camp, cook and party in its facilities."

"This magnitude of human activity could potentially generate volumes of waste and discharge which can pollute the dam," he said.

Lagman said that even if the ecopark project was not covered by the ECC requirement, it was "still required to submit an application for the issuance of a certificate of noncoverage because the EMB-DENR may still require the project proponent to 'provide additional environmental safeguards as it may deem necessary.'"

He said there was no record that Bantay Kalikasan had ever applied for the certificate.

But Lopez defended the ecopark, saying it was a joint project with the Quezon City government and the MWSS.

"With full confidence, I can say that everything we do at the ecopark has the objective of safeguarding the environment," she said.

Lopez said the lawmaker should stick to the issue "instead of hitting at noble projects."

She added: "To allege that we are violating the environment? You should go and see how the ecopark is run and was built. Lagman is diverting from the main issue that his housing project will contaminate the reservoir. This is the issue, not the ecopark."

Lea's daughter born in RP May 16

From page A1

INQUIRER not to name the hospital where she gave birth.

The mother "is doing well and taking a nap," but the father, Robert Chien, "is fussing nonstop about the baby," Lea's mom Ligaya told the INQUIRER in a phone interview yesterday.

The baby, who will be christened Nicole Beverly, weighed 6.10 lb.

"The baby is a great Mother's Day gift for Lea and my mother-in-law," Robert said.

"She's a quiet baby, a good girl," Ligaya said of her first grandchild, who was sleeping in the same room as her mother. "She looks like a mixture of Lea and Robert. But she looks a lot like Lea when she was newly born. She's fair-skinned."

Promise to mom

Lea and Robert plan to take their baby home tomorrow.

"Lea chose Nicole as [her baby's] first name because she had always liked it," Ligaya said.

Robert confirmed this: "Lea likes the way it sounds."

"Her second name is Beverly, after Robert's mom, because it was a promise we made to his family when his mom died three years ago," Lea told the INQUIRER in an interview a month ago.

The birth of her daughter could very well be the toughest undertaking for Lea, who originated the role of Kim in "Miss Saigon," staged in the West End in London. She was only 17 when she won a Laurence Olivier award for her performance.

She later reprised the role on Broadway in New York, for which she won a Tony.

12 hours of labor

"It wasn't that bad really," Ligaya related. "It was her first child and she was given an epidural."

An epidural is the injection of an anesthetic into a person's spinal cord which partially numbs the abdomen and legs.

Lea started having contractions at 1 a.m., Ligaya recalled. "That's almost 12 hours of labor. She's very happy that she got her wish of delivering her first baby the natural way."

"Everything went smoothly," Robert recounted. "Nothing went wrong and she wasn't in a lot of pain. She's just tired. We're both very tired."

Lea, according to Ligaya, wanted to thank all her relatives and friends for all the prayers because she was able to get through this ordeal quietly in spite of the pain.

Made in RP

"It was made in the Philippines; it has to come out in the Philippines," she had said in an earlier interview. "My husband agreed with me on this. The great thing about giving birth in Manila is that we have a great support system here.

"I have lots of friends who are also mommies and they give me tips," she said. "When I'm getting stressed about something, they assure me, 'Don't worry about that, you'd be fine! I've been through that twice before. It's no big deal!'"

Lea also said she would like to physically recover first before doing any concerts or shows.

"I want to give myself the chance to get my old body back and regain my strength for singing. For personal plans, we'd like to take the baby to Los Angeles, to meet family members, both on my and Rob's side. This is a very, very exciting time," she said.

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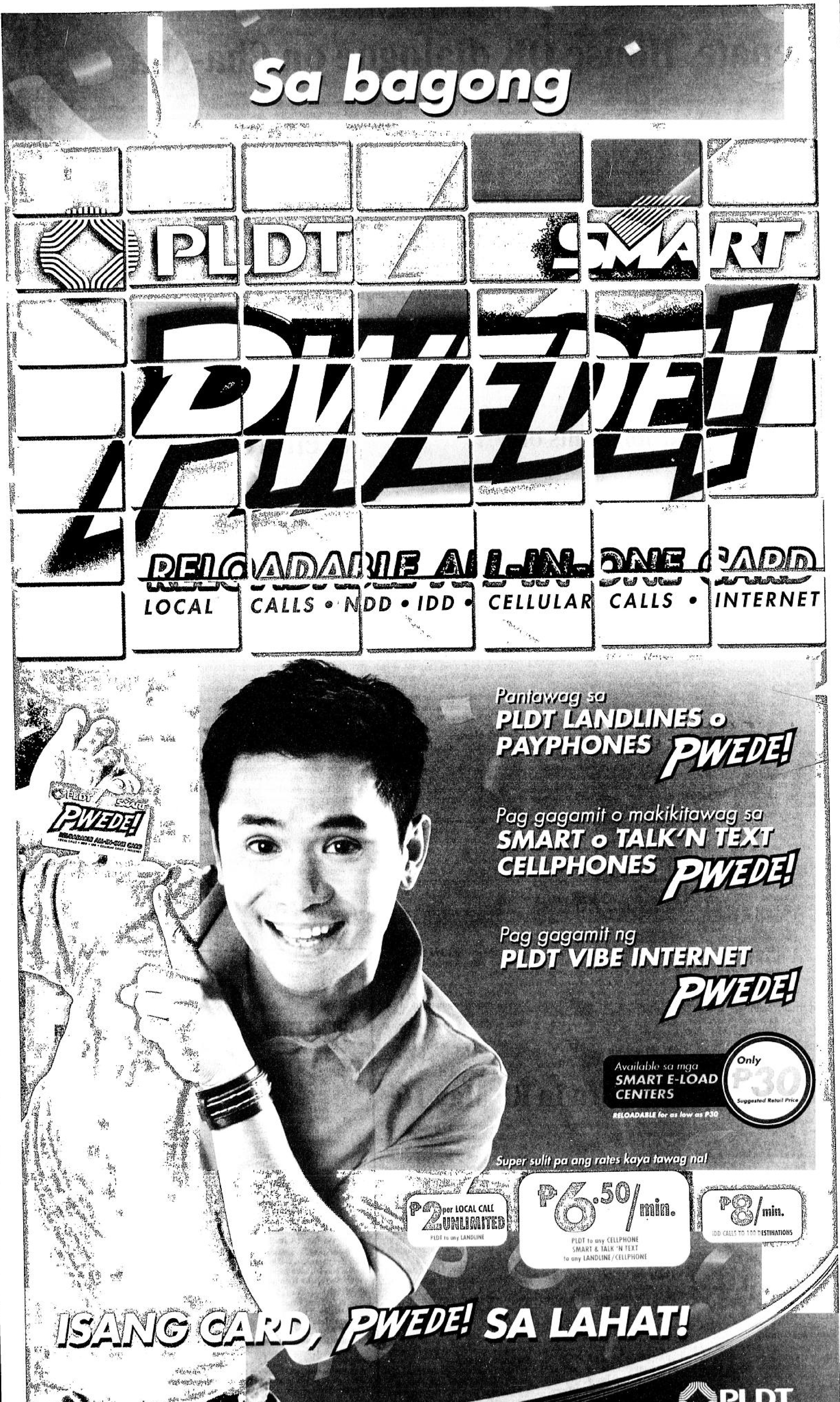
(Sgd.) **TERESITA V. ILAGAN**
Chairperson, Senior Bidding Committee

(PDI - May 17, 2006)



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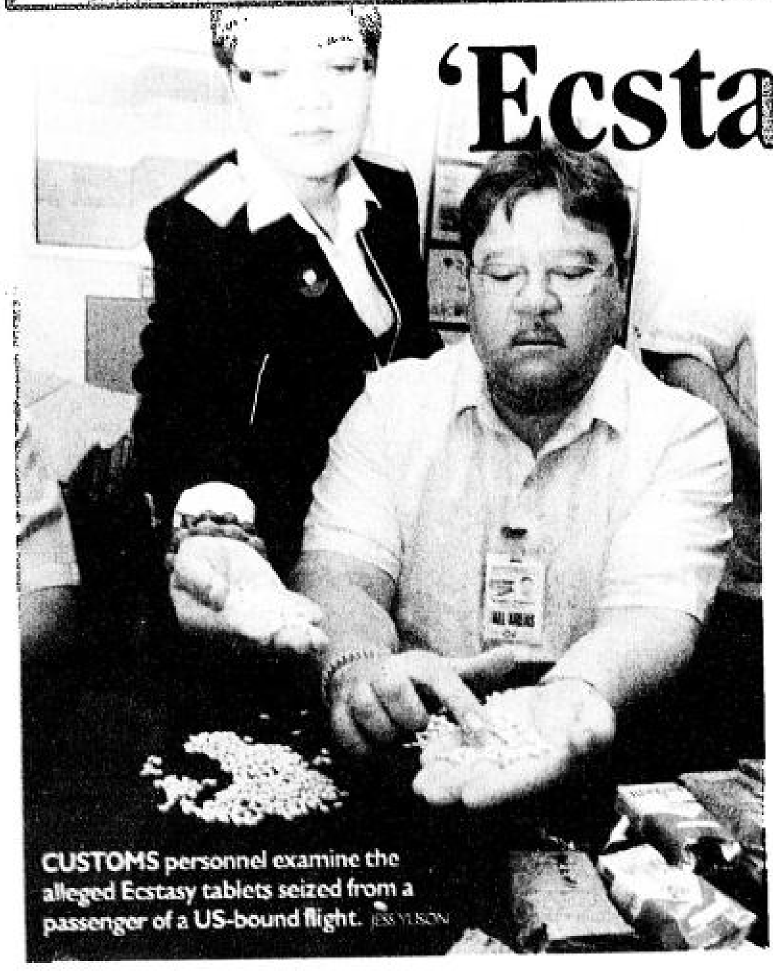
'Ecstasy' flight foiled

Illegal drugs in grandma's cargo


CUSTOMS personnel examine the alleged Ecstasy tablets seized from a passenger of a US-bound flight. JESS YUSON

By Nikko Dizon

A 74-YEAR-OLD FILIPINO WOMAN was apprehended yesterday by police and customs inspectors at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) after almost 4,000 Ecstasy tablets worth an estimated P5 million were found in a box she was taking with her on a flight to the United States.

Leoncia Aquino Edwards, a US immigrant, and her son, Manuel Bagbag, were set to fly back to New Jersey via Korean Airlines flight KE 622 when they were stopped from boarding the plane. Both ended up missing their flight.

Edwards could be charged with violating the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Law or Republic Act 9165 if police laboratory results confirm that the tablets seized from her are Ecstasy pills; customs officials said.

Edwards told reporters that she did not even know that the tablets were in the box. She added that Jerome Magno, her Filipino neighbor in New Jersey, had called her up to ask if she could bring with her to the US a package that his friend would drop off at her house in Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

"Someone brought a shoe box to my house but I wasn't there. I just packed it with my other things inside my own box. Had I known what that shoe box contained, I wouldn't have taken it with me," Edwards said. The tablets were hidden inside nine cigarette packs packed into a shoe box.

But Capt. Mariano Biteng Jr., a Customs police official, brushed aside Edward's explanation.

"Passengers should know what is in their luggage. If someone asks a favor to bring cargo not your own, open the package if it is sealed. It is for your own protection," Biteng said.

Edwards is now detained at the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency office at the Naia.

Check that LPG cylinder, NBI warns

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION has warned the public about the proliferation of unauthorized liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders following the seizure of P300,000 worth of LPG tanks bearing the brand names of several oil firms in Antipolo City.

NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division chief Jose Justo Yap said they conducted several raids on Monday based on complaints from Petron Corp., Pilipinas Shell Corp., Total Philippines Inc. and Superkalan Gaz Corp.

NBI agents led by Senior Agent Dave Segunial confiscated nearly 250 LPG gas tanks from MIA-J Poultry Supply, RJ Rice and Poultry Supply, M.R. Reyes Rice Dealer, AJOC Gen. Merchandise and JZM Marketing. The establishments had allegedly passed off the tanks as products of the four oil companies.

Girl, grandmom found dead in home

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A NINE-YEAR-OLD GIRL AND her grandmother were found murdered inside their house in Parañaque City on Monday night.

Relatives of Geleen Banzuela and her 54-year-old grandmother, Zenaida, discovered their bodies inside the toilet of their house at 17 President Quezon St., Monte Villa de Monsod in Barangay Sun Valley at around 7 p.m., city police chief Supt. Ronald Estilles said.

Initial investigation disclosed that the victims suffered head injuries which may have been inflicted by a blunt object like a pipe or a hammer, according to Estilles.

The victims' neighbors told the police their last sighting of the older Banzuela was on Sunday.

Estilles ordered his men to look for Banzuela's son, 33-year-old Gilbert, who was nowhere to be found when relatives forced their way into the house, prompting the police to consider him as the main suspect.

Estilles said the suspect was allegedly addicted to drugs.

"It is possible that he may have killed his mother and his niece in anger because he was not given money to sustain his drug habit. It is always like that in drug cases that we have handled in the past," he added.

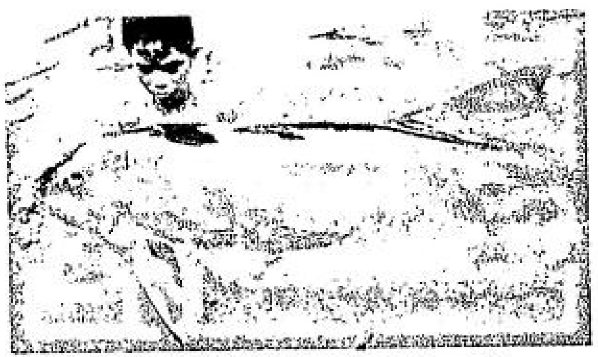
The victims' bodies were brought to the Loyola Funeral Homes for autopsy.

Marine mammal turns up in creek

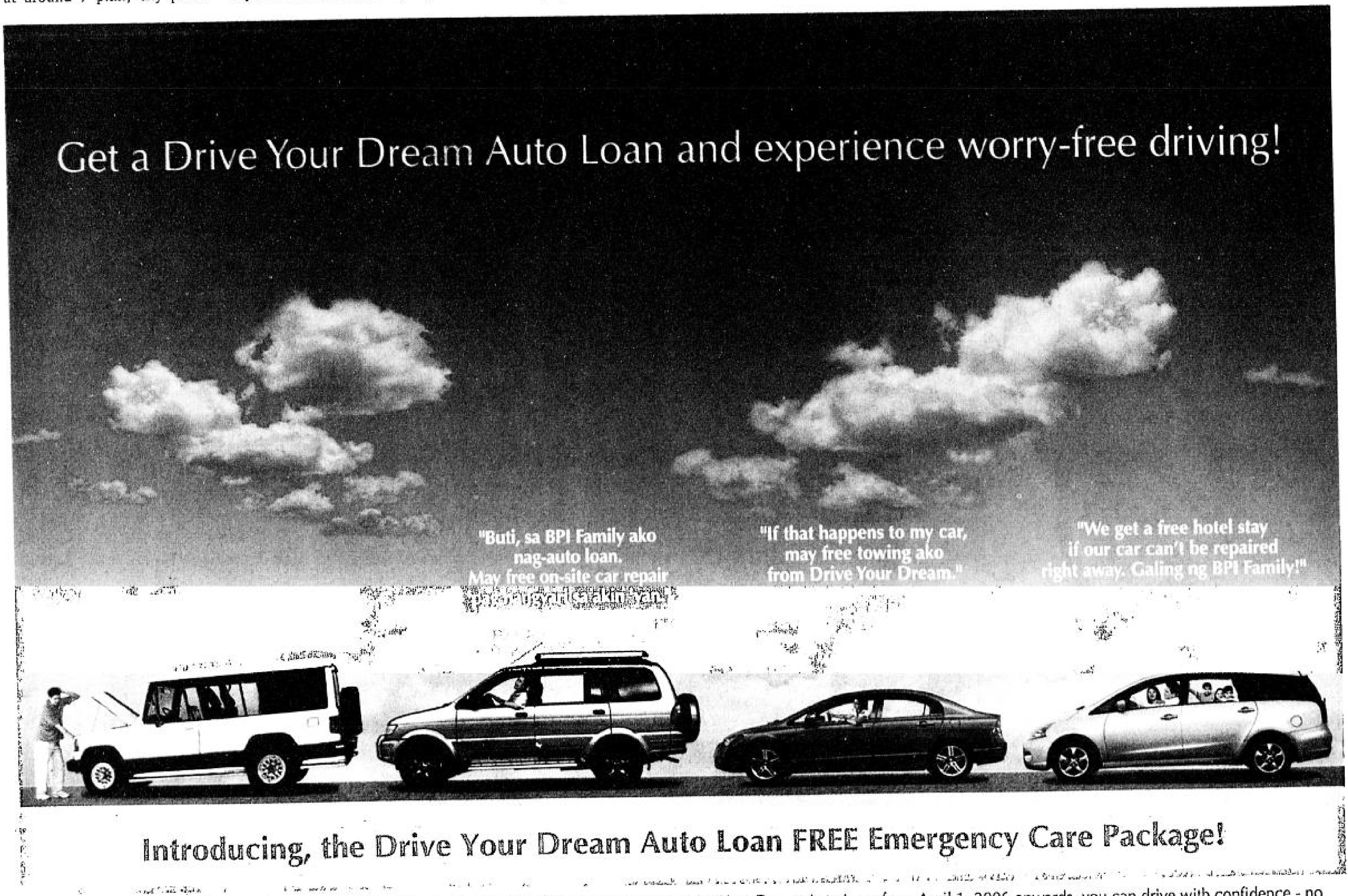
A MARINE MAMMAL ABOUT NINE FEET long and weighing about 150 kilos, swam into a creek connected to the Manila Bay, just off the Coastal Road in Parañaque City, before noon yesterday.

It died several hours later on the way to the Manila Yacht Club for examination by marine experts, said Dr. Ajerico Sebastian, officer-in-charge of the Manila Zoo zoological division.

He said they have yet to determine whether the mammal was a whale or a dolphin. It was probably sick because it had several wounds and abrasions, Sebastian added. *Jocelyn Uy*


PARAÑAQUE City resident with surprise visitor.

EDWIN BACASMAS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5 cops face robbery raps

By Luige A. del Puerto

FIVE MANILA POLICEMEN, FOUR OF whom were arrested in an antidrugs operation in Tondo, Manila, last week, have been charged with robbery in band in the Office of the Ombudsman.

Charged by the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group of the Philippine National Police were PO1 Erwin Castro, PO2 Jonathan Ruiz, PO3 Mike Fabian Ongpauco, PO2 Dranreb Cipriano and PO1 Rhunjalie Salazar.

Salazar is detailed to the National Capital Region Police Office-Regional Intelligence and Special Operations Office, while the rest are members of the Manila Police District's anti-illegal drugs division.

Salazar was the fifth policeman who allegedly got away when a team of agents from the CIDG and the Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operations Task Force arrested the four policemen last Thursday in a parking lot on Jose Abad Santos corner Hermosa Streets, police said.

The area is a "well-known" trading place for illegal drugs, according to the CIDG.

A search of the policemen's car yielded a kilo of suspected methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu which later turned out to be "tawas," a crystalline substance used as deodorant. The policemen claimed they were trying to arrest big time drug buyers by pretending to be drug pushers.

However, they had no idea that their "buyer" was working for the CIDG.

The five policemen were charged with robbery after they brandished their guns to get the cash—actually a combination of marked and boodle money—which the CIDG asset was carrying for the entrapment operation.

"At gunpoint, the armed men (Manila policemen) forcibly opened the door of the vehicle and attempted to snatch the buy bust money but failed due to the interdiction of the CIDG operatives," said the CIDG charge sheet.

"The suspects claimed they were also police officers conducting a police operation. However, when asked for documents and the names of their team leader, they failed to show any document and also failed to name their team leader," said Supt. Ireno Inal, a CIDG officer.

The four policemen, except for Salazar who fled, were released to their superior pending the filing of charges against them.

METROBRIEFS

Museum to rise in Marikina

TO ENSURE its place in the city's history, the oldest chapel in the oldest barangay in Marikina City is planning to build a historical museum. The museum will be built beside the San Isidro Labrador Chapel in Barangay Jesus Dela Pena, the oldest barangay in the city. The church is where the first Mass in Marikina City was celebrated by Father Pedro de Arce on April 16, 1630. For this reason, the city celebrates its foundation day on the same date. Pastoral Council chair Tess Salas told the INQUIRER they plan to display books and even relics and antiques at the museum that could enlighten residents about the history of the barangay. In the meantime, proponents are looking for donors to fund the project. *Edson C. Tandoc Jr.*

'Safe ka sa Divisoria'

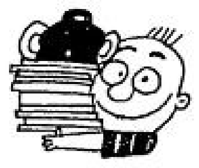
ILLUSTRATION: STEPH BRAVO

IN AN EFFORT to provide assistance and security to thousands of students shopping for school supplies, the Manila Police District will be launching its "Safe Ka sa Divisoria" project tomorrow. Supt. Romulo Sapitula, MPD Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit chief, said they are expecting students and their parents to flock to Divisoria in the next few days to shop for notebooks, bags and other school items. "Through the program, we will ensure the safety of the shoppers and prevent common criminal incidents such as robbery and theft from taking place," Sapitula told the INQUIRER in an interview. Sapitula said he would deploy plainclothes policemen on Recto Avenue and the streets of Ilaya and Juan Luna, where most of school supply vendors are located. *Margaux C. Ortiz*

Girl dies of injuries

THE TWO-YEAR-OLD girl who was allegedly dropped from the third floor of her house by her nanny's former boyfriend died of injuries on Monday morning. Aira Plan was brought to the Philippine General Hospital on Sunday night after Marciano Garrado dropped her from the third floor of her house on A. Cruz St, Purok 4, Barangay Lower Bicutan, said SPO1 Conrad Mapili, case investigator. "The girl's parents just informed us this morning," Mapili told the INQUIRER yesterday. Aira's parents have filed murder charges against Garrado in the city prosecutor's office. Garrado was visiting the girl's nanny, Teresita Tayobong, to win her back but when she ignored him, the suspect allegedly picked up the girl who was playing on the terrace and dropped her from the third floor. The police have yet to receive the results of the autopsy conducted on the victim but Mapili said the child died due to fractures she sustained in her skull. *Jocelyn R. Uy*

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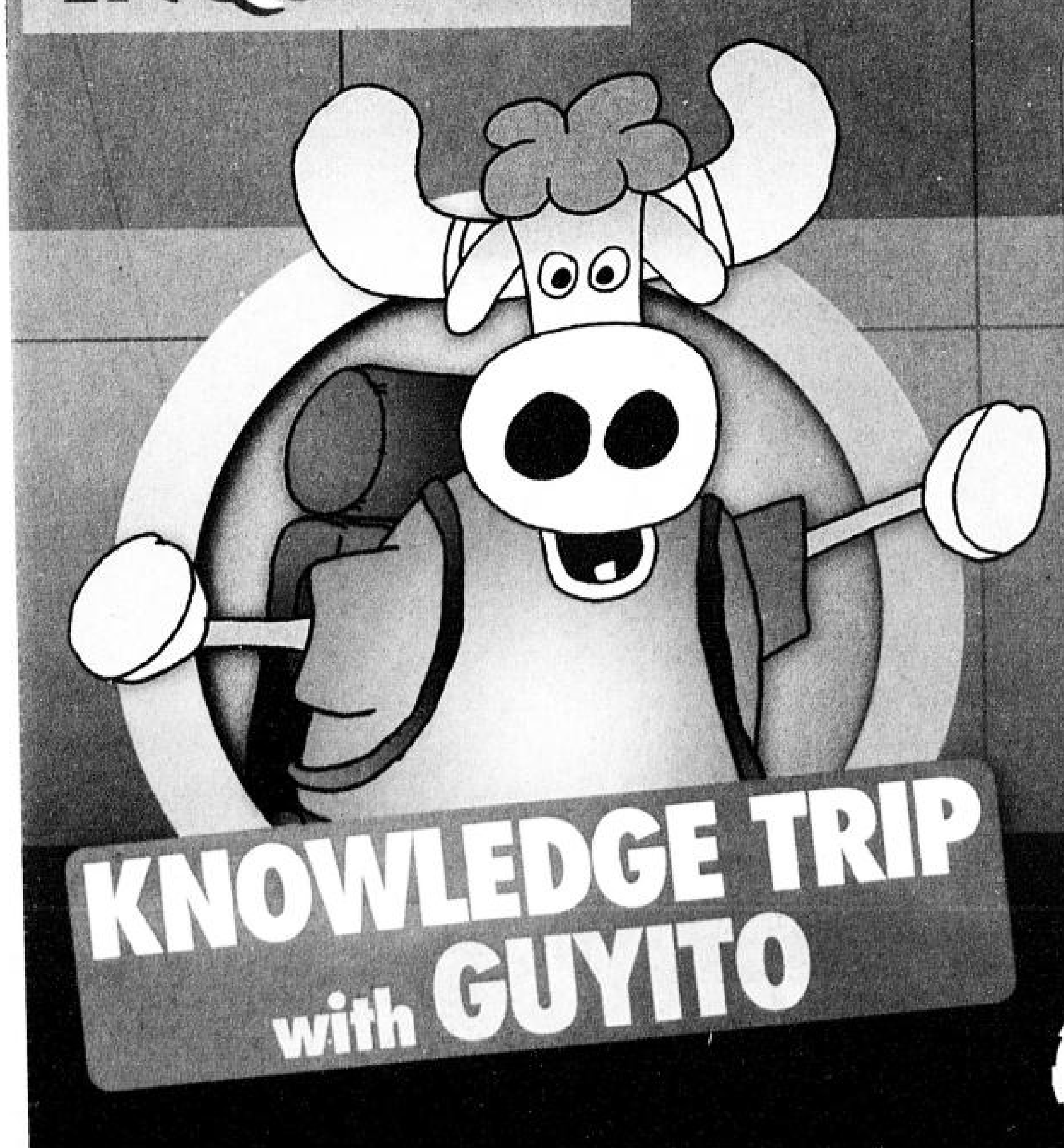

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Libya made 'no concessions' to US for new ties

TRIPOLI—LIBYA TUESDAY BASKED in a new era of ties with the United States after Washington's announcement of a resumption of full diplomatic relations, emphasizing no concessions had been made to ensure the rapprochement.

Foreign Minister Abdel Rahman Shalgham welcomed the announcement—which also saw Libya's removal from the US list of states that sponsor terrorism—as a "new page" in relations between the two countries.

The foreign ministry's information chief Hassuna al-Shawesh told a news conference "no concession" was made to the US, saying relations would be "based on mutual respect and equality, without interference in internal affairs."

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had said Washington will soon open an embassy in Tripoli. Diplomatic ties were broken in 1981, two years after the US Embassy was sacked by radical student demonstrators.

Their resumption also comes two decades after alleged Libyan-sponsored terror attacks prompted the US to launch air raids on Tripoli, killing 51 people.

Rice said on Monday: "We are taking these actions in recognition of Libya's commitment to its renunciation of terrorism and the excellent cooperation Libya has provided to the United States and other members of the international community in response to common global threats faced by the civilized world since Sept. 11, 2001."

Shawesh even indicated that the top US diplomat could visit Tripoli soon, saying Libya "is waiting for an upcoming visit by Ms Rice and we are happy for this." Such a visit has not been excluded by the US.

Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East David Welch said in Washington US diplomatic representation in Tripoli will be elevated to the rank of ambassador within 15 days.

The improvement in relations and Monday's announcement of a resumption of full diplomatic ties follows Libyan leader Moamar Gadhafi's decision in December, 2003 to halt its program of weapons of mass destruction.

After Gadhafi agreed to open Libya's weapons production sites to inspection by US and British experts, Washington opened a special interests section in Tripoli in February, 2004. This was later upgraded to a "liaison office" the same year.

Shawesh said all differences between Libya and the US have now been resolved, and that Monday's announcement "will give a major boost to economic and political ties" between the two countries.

The foreign ministry said in a statement that "the resumption of full diplomatic relations between Libya and America is an important step destined to reinforce bilateral ties in the interests of world peace, stability and security."

Welcoming the decision in London, British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said: "Libya has made significant progress since its historic decisions in 2003 to renounce terrorism and eliminate its weapons of mass destruction." *AFP*

GADHAFI REUTERS

Jew-Arab couple fight to live together

By Allyn Fisher-Ilan

RAMALLAH, WEST BANK—JASMIN AVISSAR and Osama Zatar fell in love, got married and hoped to live happily ever after—but she's an Israeli Jew and he's a Palestinian Muslim and now they have nowhere to call home.

The couple's "Romeo and Juliet" struggle to live together is a rare tale of cross-border love in a land riven by years of violence between Israel and Palestinians.

Avissar, a 25-year-old classical dancer, met Zatar, 26, when they both worked at an isolated animal shelter on the border between Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank.

They wed two years ago, but Israel has not granted them permission to live in the Jewish state. So they live in the West Bank city of Ramallah but on borrowed time—Avissar's Israeli army-issued permit to cross into the Palestinian-run city is temporary.

Israel denies residence permits to virtually all Palestinian men under-35 under a law, passed during a five-year-old Palestinian revolt, aimed at tightening security and preventing suicide bombings. The Israeli military also generally bars Israelis from Palestinian-ruled territory.

It is rare for Jews to marry Arabs either in Israel or the occupied territories, and the few who do tend to keep quiet about a union frowned upon by many Israelis and Palestinians.

"We're in a Kafka-esque situation. All we want is the right to live together as a married couple," said Avissar, who crosses an Israeli checkpoint almost daily to work as a waitress in Jerusalem.

PALESTINIAN Muslim Osama Zatar, 26, with his Israeli Jew wife, Jasmin Avissar, 25, near the West Bank village of Qarawat Bani Zeid. REUTERS

"The authorities are constantly trying to keep us apart," said Zatar, a sculptor who sports a dark ponytail. "We love each other and plan a future together, if we can have one."

That "if" rings through their lives—their uncertain situation makes talking about buying a house, or having children impossible.

The couple have appealed to Israel's High Court to force the government to allow them to live together indefinitely, either in Israel or in the Palestinian territories.

Their chances of success are uncertain.

On Sunday, Israel's High Court narrowly upheld a law that denies Israeli residency to many Palestinians who marry Israelis, rejecting appeals against a statute that critics say violates human rights and is racist.

With their lives on hold, Avissar and Zatar have struggled to make a decent living in Ramallah.

Zatar has been unable to find regular work, a common problem for many Palestinians in the West Bank's weak economy, even before a US-led boycott on foreign funds to a Palestinian government led by the militant Hamas group.

The couple's main income now comes from what Avissar makes serving tables at the Jerusalem coffee shop.

But the couple still dream of a happy-ever-after.

Avissar hopes to open a ballet school for Palestinians—if Israel ever grants her a long-term permit to stay in the West Bank. Her family in Israel has accepted her marriage. Some of Zatar's relatives had accused him of betraying his people by marrying an Israeli; now they accept her.

"Many people look at me as a stereotype Israeli, as a potential soldier or settler, just like all Palestinians in the eyes of Israelis are potential terrorists," said Avissar.

"We hope to show everyone there's a different way." *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

81 now dead in Brazil gang violence

SAO PAULO—A powerful gang that has launched an offensive against Brazilian police attacked civilian targets for the first time Monday, terrorizing Sao Paulo in three nights of violence that has left 81 dead, officials said. Some 180 attacks have taken place since Friday in Brazil's wealthiest and most populous state, killing 39 police officers, 38 suspected criminals and four civilians. At least 48 police and passers-by were wounded, while 91 suspects have been arrested. Gangs targeted civilians for the first time Monday, torching 56 buses and attacking eight banks, the state government said. *AFP*

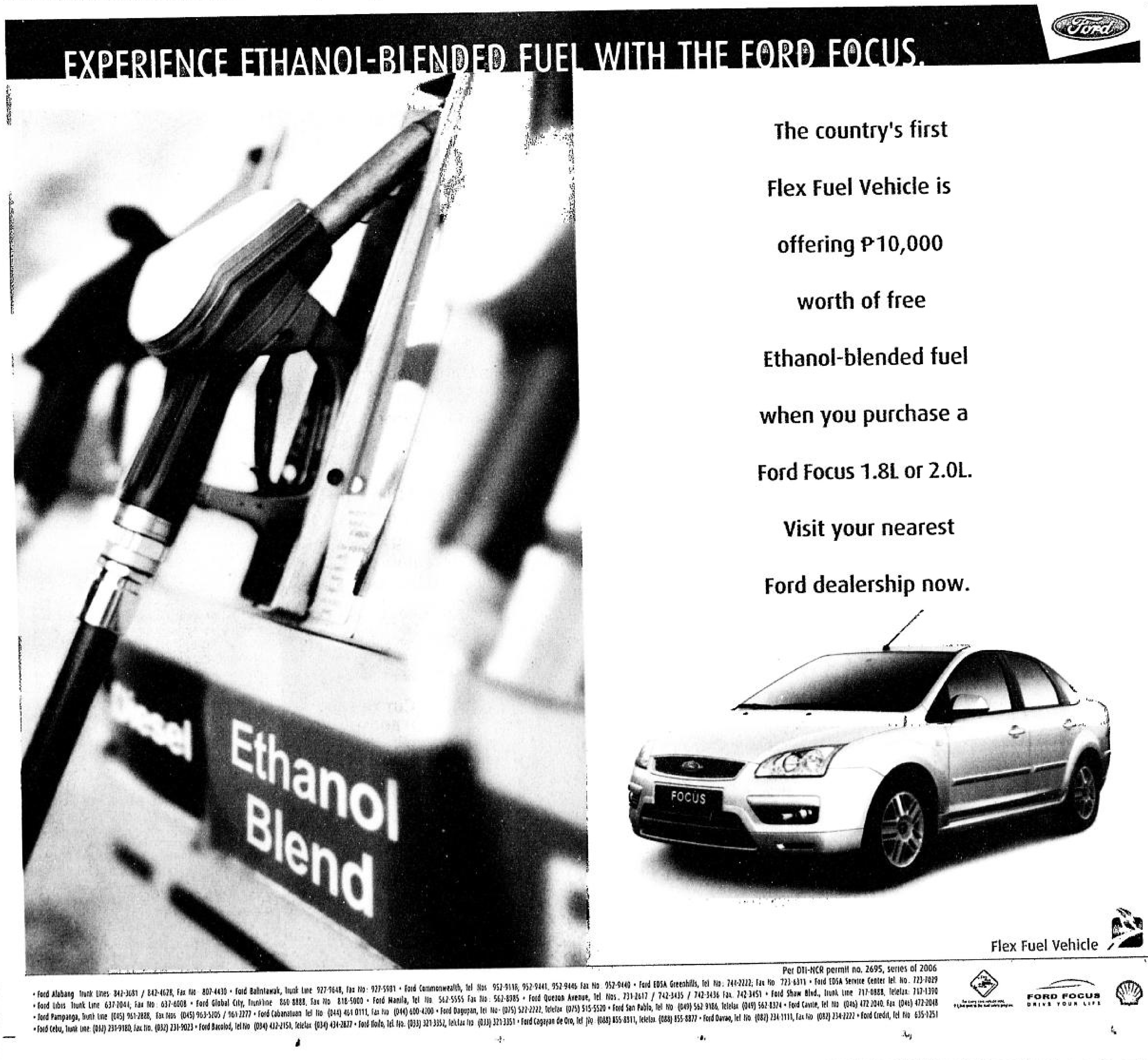
Chavez defiant in face of arms ban

CHAVEZ AFP

LONDON—Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on Monday brushed aside the US suspension of arms sales to his country, saying "this doesn't matter to us at all." "It's the empire and it has a great capacity to do harm to the countries of the world," he said, referring to the US as "an irrational empire." The Venezuelan leader, on a visit to London, also said his government would not respond with punitive measures such as travel restrictions. "There's no way we will do that. We will find a solution to this," he said. The United States on Monday announced it was imposing a ban on arms sales to Venezuela because of what it claims is a lack of support by Chavez's government for counterterrorism efforts. For nearly a year, there has been a nearly total lack of cooperation with antiterrorism, said Darla Jordan, a State Department spokesperson. Chavez, who often claims that Washington is planning to invade his country, ruled out shutting down his country's oil production in response to the US arms embargo. "We will never use oil as a political weapon against a people," he said during an address to about 600 business leaders, academics and diplomats at a London banquet hall. *AP*

B&L lens cleaner recalled worldwide

BAUSCH & Lomb said Monday that it was halting worldwide sales of its ReNu With MoistureLoc soft contact lens cleaner because tests showed that its misuse could leave consumers at risk for a potentially blinding fungal infection. The move followed the company's decision last month to suspend US sales of the product after federal health officials linked an unusually high number of the fungus cases to use of the lens cleaner. *NYT*



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Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

6,000 US troops to border

WASHINGTON—PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH ON Monday ordered up to 6,000 troops to the US-Mexico border in a bid to stem the flow of illegal immigrants into the United States.

"The need to secure our border is urgent," Bush said in a nationally broadcast speech, underscoring the importance of the issue.

He said up to 6,000 National Guard troops could be deployed on the southern border for up to one year beginning next month.

The US president insisted that any effort to tighten America's permeable border must be coupled with a guest-worker program for undocumented immigrants already in the country.

There are an estimated 11.5 million illegal migrants in the United States, more than half of them from Mexico.

Such a program, Bush said, would be part of a comprehensive immigration reform that would also provide a pathway to citizenship for many workers currently living "in the shadows of our society."

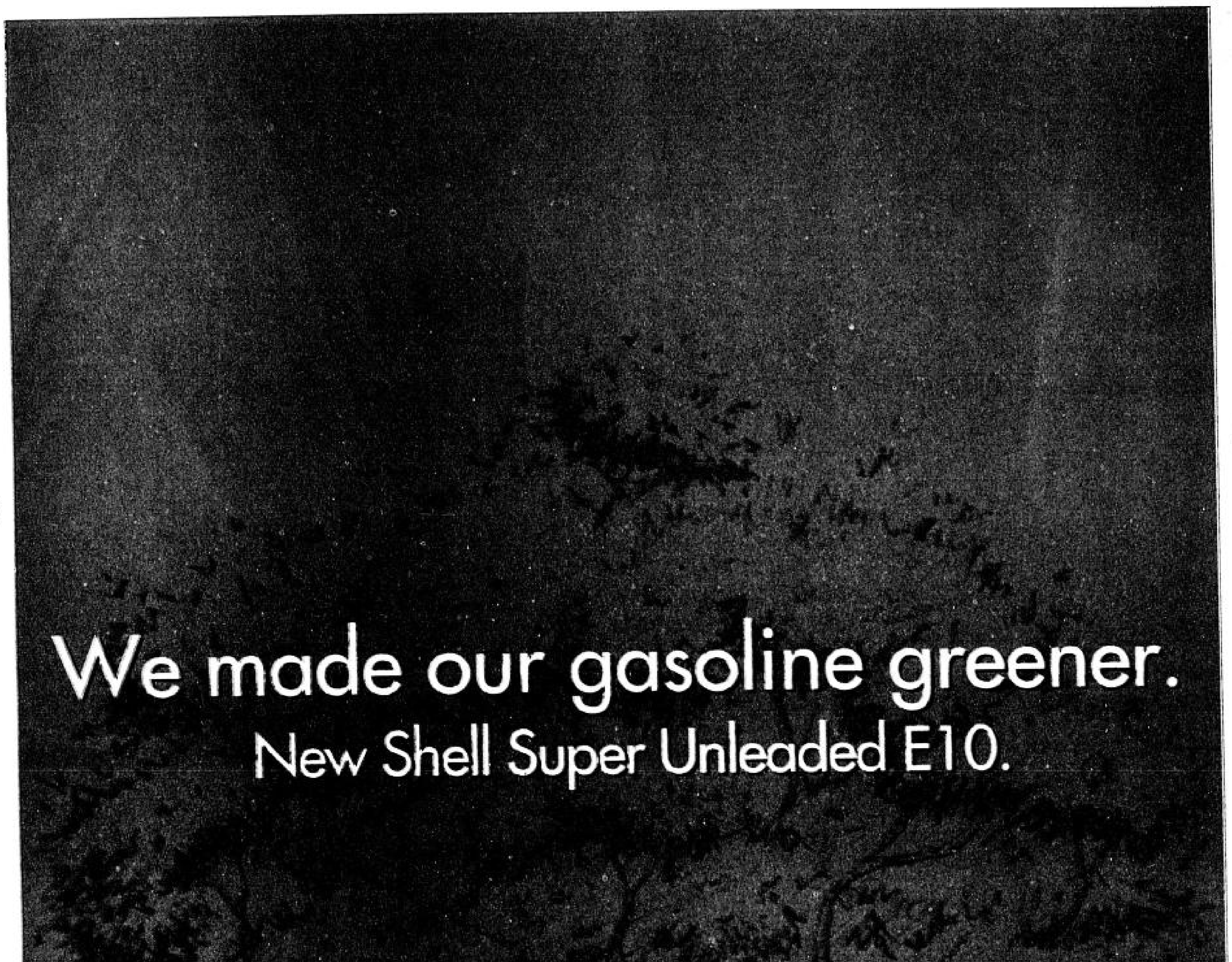
"To secure our border, we must create a temporary worker program," the president said, adding that creating a guest-worker program acknowledges that "there are many people on the other side of our border who will do anything to come to America to work and build a better life."

The president's proposals added controversy to the immigration debate. Street protests in recent weeks have attracted millions of legal and illegal migrants and their supporters.

The demonstrations urged a less restrictive immigration policy, and opposed a bill approved in December by the House of Representatives that would make illegal entry a crime.

Bush said his temporary worker proposal "would create a legal path for foreign workers to enter our country in an orderly way, for a limited period of time," and "would give honest immigrants a way to provide for their families while respecting the law." *AFP*

US BORDER Patrol agents use All Terrain vehicles as they patrol along the US border with Mexico in this undated photograph. Bush announced plans to deploy up to 6,000 National Guard troops to the border because "we do not yet have full control of the border." REUTERS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Middle path disappoints both sides

By Monica Davey and Ralph Blumenthal

CHICAGO—AS JOSE F. WATCHED PRESIdent Bush's address from an apartment on this city's Northwest side, he shook his head fiercely at moments: At the prospect of tamper-proof identification cards for legal workers, at the many mentions of increased border security, and at what he saw, in the end, as uncertainty of the future Bush intends for illegal immigrants like himself.

"I worry about the militarization and whether this will mean more deaths on the border," said Jose F., 27, who sneaked in from Mexico nearly eight years ago and who asked that his last name not be used because he feared losing his job at a social services agency, deportation, or both. "And identification cards will only make it harder to survive and people will have to go further underground and work for cash."

In Houston, meanwhile, Louise Whiteford watched the president with equal skepticism. Whiteford, president of Texans for Immigration Reform, a group opposed to illegal immigration, swiftly took issue with several of Bush's promises, including an increase in the Border Patrol from 9,000 to 12,000 agents.

"This is very inadequate," said Whiteford, 76. "That's about the number of police in Fort Worth and Dallas." And when the president said he planned to add 6,000 more by 2008, she shook her head, adding, "That's too long."

If Jose F. and Whiteford were any indication, Bush managed to disappoint people on both sides of the immigration debate on Monday night.

Each side saw hints of a further fight ahead.

Some supporters of tighter border restrictions said they did not approve of the way they said Bush had signaled that he wants some of the nation's estimated 11 million illegal immigrants to become legal. On the other hand, some immigrants and their advocates said they did not agree with his clearly stated opposition to anything resembling "amnesty."

"I don't know what he is saying for someone like me," Jose F. said. "I have been working really hard. I have learned English. I pay taxes. I am not here in the country to bring problems. If I don't fit into the group" that might gain legal status "it's going to upset me."

Whiteford was on guard against anything Bush might say about congressional bills that would allow illegal immigrants to legalize their status over time with a fine.

"My citizenship is not for sale," she said. "I don't like the idea that money can buy citizenship." *NYT*

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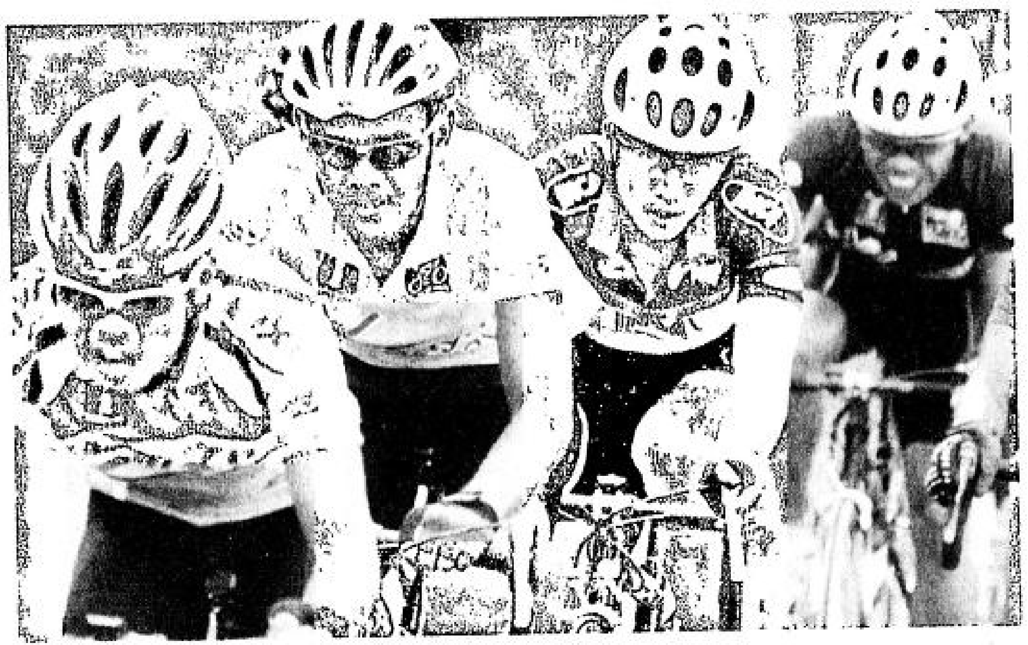


CLOSE GUARDING: The Tour's big guns ride together along Sumulong Highway in Antipolo City. Sunbolt's Santy Barnachea, in yellow jersey, symbolic of overall leadership (second from left), pedals behind Elixir Sport's John Ricafort as Inca's Erickson Obosa and two-stage winner Arnel Quirimit, also of Elixir Sports, watch his back. BOY CABRIDO

Barnachea's lead shrinks

Gorrantes outkicks Davadilla

By Musong R. Castillo

STAGE winner Reinhard Gorantes celebrates with a supporter in Lucena City. BOY CABRIDO

LUCENA CITY—WHERE'S HELP when you need it?

Santy Barnachea couldn't find anyone willing, and his overall lead in the Tour Pilipinas Tanduay Padyak Pinoy 2006 yesterday diminished after Stage 5, where an obscure rider finally came to the fore and dangerous Frederick Feliciano emerged as his closest pursuer.

Barnachea got into a shouting match with some of the Tour's rookies who refused to help and lost significant ground as Reinhard Gorrantes outkicked Warren Davadilla at the end of the 144.5-kilometer, up-and-down journey from Marikina to here.

It was the first career stage win for the 26-year-old Gorrantes, who timed 3 hours, 30 minutes and 21 seconds, the same clocking of the third-placed Feliciano who zoomed to second from third overall, now just 4 minutes and 7 seconds behind Barnachea.

Gorrantes' victory also marked the first time a non-skipper won a stage in this Tour. Philippine Team members Arnel Quirimit of Elixir Sports (Stages 2 and 4), Feliciano of Air21 (Stage 3) and Ericson Obosa of Inca (Stage 1) were the previous winners.

Gorrantes also cracked the top 10, dislodging Eusebio Quinones at 10th, 22 minutes and 35 seconds off the overall leader.

Davadilla, whose quest for an unprecedented third win in the summer classic now but a dream, tried to win the stage but miscalculated a sharp turn heading to the finish.

Barnachea, who was hoping to rule the lap as a birthday gift to his son Darren, who turned two yesterday, arrived in a 22-man third wave, 3:47 behind the lap winner.

He now has a total time of 21 hours, 21 minutes and 35 seconds heading to the windup of the short edition of the Tour.

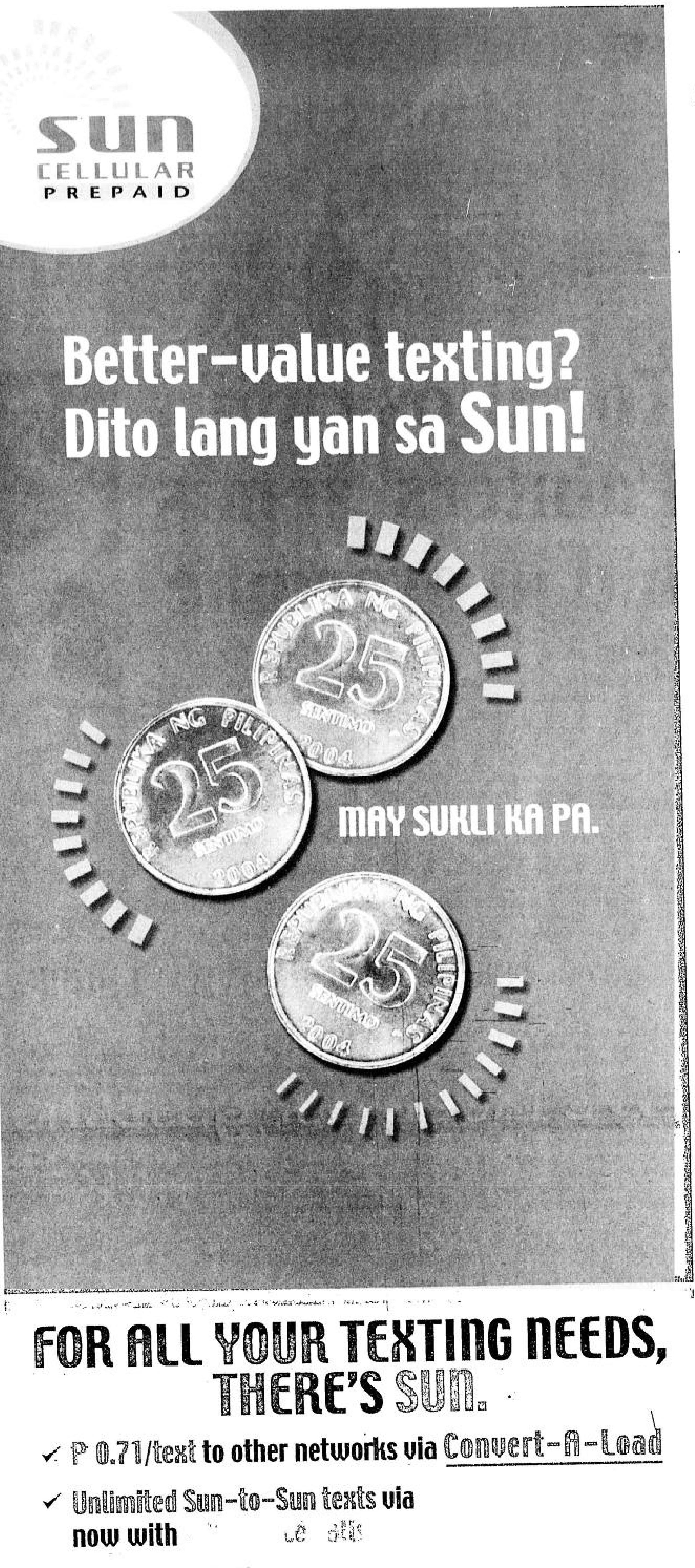
Quirimit, who helped Barnachea widen his lead to 7:29 over Obosa after Stage 4, was also in that group like Obosa, who dropped to third.

"I rode with a lot of rookies," Barnachea, who has been wearing the yellow jersey of overall leadership since Stage 2, said in Filipino. "They are young but already too opportunistic."

The still intact field of 80 riders have three more stages left with the event to be decided in the next two starting with today's trek to Sta. Rosa, Laguna, from here via the dreaded "Tatlong Eme" in Pagbilao, Quezon.

Cossack Riders back on top after five grueling stages

LUCENA CITY—COSSACK VODKA PUT FOUR RIDers inside the top 20 in Stage 5 of the Tour Pilipinas Tanduay Padyak Pinoy 2006 from Marikina to this bustling city yesterday to reclaim the overall team lead from Team Elixir. With rookies Edgardo Ballecer and Irish Valenzuela finishing in the first pack with a clocking of 3 hours, 30 minutes and 21 seconds, Cossack zoomed to a 2-minute and 39.073 advantage over Elixir with its total time of 87:26:35.149. Air21 actually won the stage with skipper Frederick Feliciano anchoring a team effort of 14:08:55.202, to be in third overall, 20:11.673 minutes off the pace.



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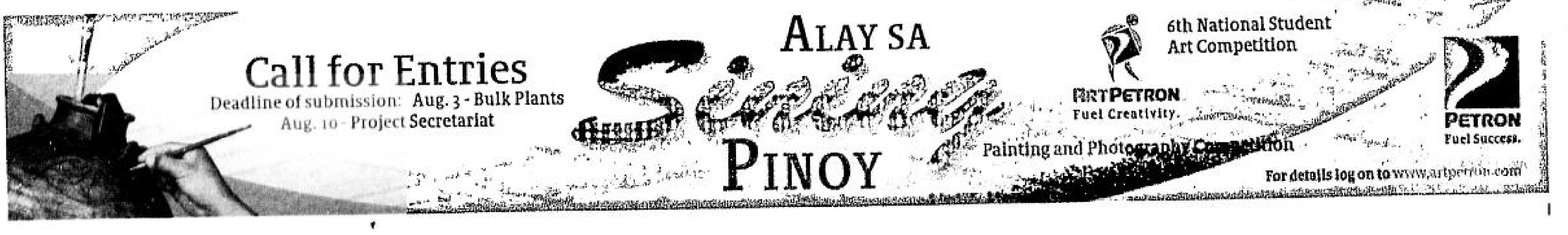

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Alaska	7	7
Ginebra	6	6
Coca-Cola	6	7
Talk 'N Text	5	8
Air21	5	9
Sta. Lucia	3	10

GAMES TODAY
(Araneta Coliseum)
4:40 p.m.—Coca-Cola vs Ginebra
7:35 p.m.—Purefoods vs Talk 'N Text

Giants continue mission under pall of gloom

THE TWO-HOUR TIME SLOT MONday morning at the Adidas Sports Camp at The Fort in Taguig should have been filled with echoes of bouncing balls, screeching shoes and shrill whistles.

Instead, the gym was dark and completely silent. The team that should have been practicing there at 9 a.m. took the day off because no one, it seemed, felt like playing.

"We weren't in the proper mind frame," said Purefoods coach Ryan Gregorio, who canceled the Giants' practice a day after forward Eugene Tejada suffered a severe neck injury in what could be the worst on-court accident to ever hit the pro league.

Had Tejada not fallen bad on his back during a rebound battle against Red Bull Sunday night, the Giants' worries would have been centered on how to grab that other outright semifinal slot in the Gran Matador Brandy-PBA Philippine Cup today at the Araneta Coliseum, where they will face the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals.

Gregorio's worries would have been simply on how to work around a Phone Pals squad boosted by major trade acquisitions using a roster struck down by the absence of Kerby Raymundo, Jun Limpot and Noy Castillo due to injuries.

Gregorio also had to worry about the state of his team: "It's hard to tell (if the players are okay). I just told them we have to stay together, we have to lift each other's spirits."

Perhaps Gregorio can simply tear a page off the Barangay Ginebra playbook and use it against the Phone Pals in their 7:35 p.m. encounter. The Kings, playing without starters Rommel Adducul and Erik Menk and key back-up players Andy Seigle and Rodney Santos, managed to surprise the Phone Pals last week.

Ginebra, which plays Coca-Cola today at 4:40 p.m., leaned on Mark Caguioa's 42 points to upset a Talk 'N Text squad beefed up by Don Allado and Renren Ritualo.

But the Kings, at least, did not have any mental or emotional worries to deal with. For the Giants, getting that other outright semifinal slot—San Miguel already claimed the first one—seems too trivial when put beside the tragic event that befell their teammate. *Jasmine W. Payo*

Tortillos ruin Painters' semis bid in overtime

By Jasmine W. Payo

MARVIN CRUZ TOOK FULL CONTROL IN overtime as Granny Goose foiled Rain or Shine's bid for an outright semifinal berth with a 78-73 victory in the PBL Unity Cup yesterday at the San Andres Gym in Manila.

More importantly, the Tortillos clinched the twice-to-beat advantage in the quarterfinals after wrapping up their elimination campaign with a third-best 8-6 record.

Cruz went scoreless in the fourth quarter but shot nine of his 15 points in the extra period.

JR Quiñahan teamed up with Cruz to finish with 13 points, 11 rebounds and three blocks.

"Marvin was awesome," said coach Robert Sison. "We caught Rain or Shine in their off night."

Harbour Centre secured the last quarterfinal berth by nipping TeleTech in overtime, 81-78.

GAMES TOMORROW
(Olivarez Sports Center)
2 p.m.—Magnolia vs Toyota Otis
4 p.m.—Montaña vs Hapee-PCU

The scores:

First Game

HARBOUR CENTRE 81—Tenorio 21, Yeo 14, Reyes 11, Maierhofer 8, Chia 7, Gaco 6, Gamboa 4, Arana 4, Coching 3, Lanete 2, Paterno 1.

TELETECH 78—Doruelo 16, Capus 14, Latoreno 12, Mercado 11, Gelig 6, Villamin 5, Tang 5, Estrada 4, Mendoza 3, Tolentino 2, Sierra 0, Duncil 0.

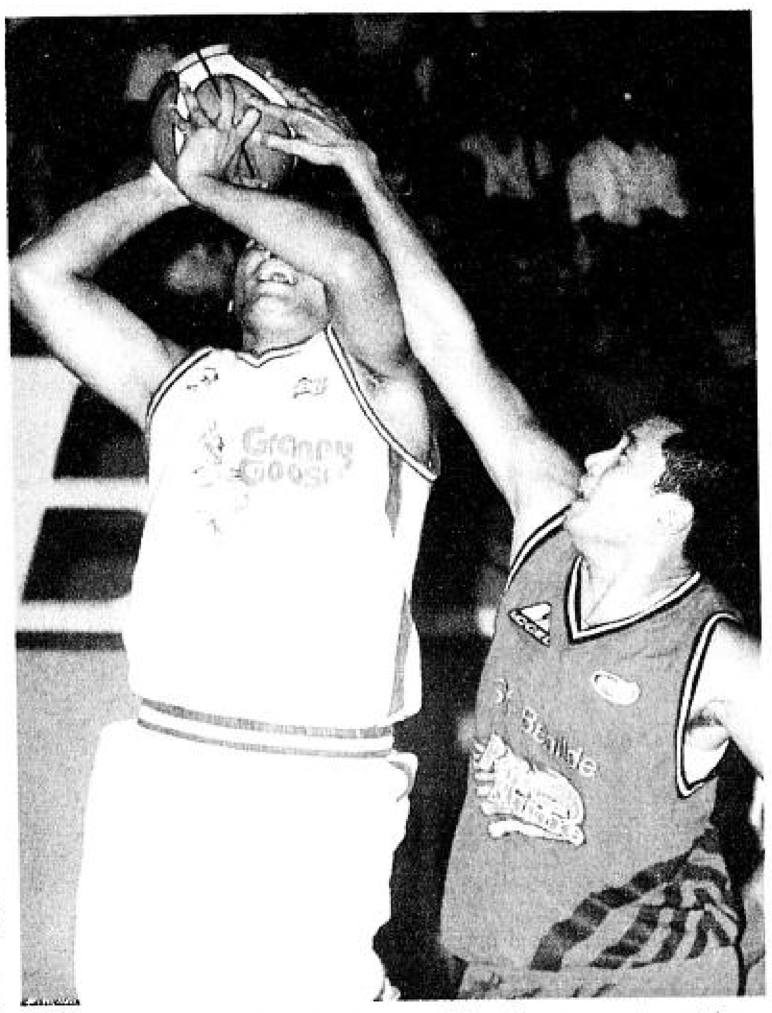
Quarters: 20-21, 38-35, 63-54, 75-75, 81-78 (OT)

Second Game

GRANNY GOOSE 78—Cruz 15, Quiñahan 13, Dela Peña 9, Saldua 8, Grijaldo 7, Santos 6, David 5, Latonio 5, Ibañes 5, Concha 3, Alfad 2, Gavino 0, Ferrer 0.

RAIN OR SHINE 73—Tangkay 26, Malabanan 12, Eman 10, Enrile 8, Cabatu 6, Ortiguerra 4, Yambao 3, Reyes 2, Sta. Maria 2, Orbeta 0, Urra 0.

Quarters: 15-14, 33-29, 43-46, 64-64, 78-73 (OT)



MARVIN Ortiguerra (right) of Rain or Shine thwarts an attempt by Granny Goose's JR Quiñahan in yesterday's game. ERIK ARAZAS

Consistency name of game for leader Sy

2006 Asian F3 Series Driver's Championship
1. **Tyson Sy**, Speedtech Asia, 60 points
2. **Dillon Battistini**, JA Motorsports, 33 points
3. **James Winslow**, JA Motorsports, 32 points
4. **John O'Hara**, Aran Racing, 23 points
5. **Dado Peña**, Team Goddard, 22 points

TYSON SY'S amazing domination of the opening three rounds gave him a big head start in the battle for the overall championship in the Asian Formula Three series.

But the Filipino young gun can't afford to rest on his early victories, according to Speedtech Asia chief Edgen Dy-Liacco.

With this year's series featuring three races in each leg, little mistakes in the time trials and early rounds could prove costly, said Dy-Liacco, adding consistency will be the key if Sy wants to crown himself the overall winner at season's end.

"We need to be consistent to earn more points," said the 36-year-old Dy-Liacco. "It is good Tyson is now more matured. He has learned a lot from his experience the previous year and we expect better results this time."

Sy, 18, choked several times under pressure in last year's series, especially in the last two legs at the Batangas Racing Circuit, and eventually finished fourth overall, a point behind third placer James Winslow of England.

This time, however, Sy has approached each race with confidence, aware that "whatever problems I encounter with the car will be fixed."

"If there's a problem during the race, I will have to make adjustments to my driving," said Sy, who will go into the next three rounds next month at the Zhuhai International Circuit in China with 60 points. "The risk is bigger if you're too aggressive and you wind up without points."

Series newcomer Dillon Battistini of England is running second with 33 points built around two second place finishes at the BRC, while his teammate, Winslow, is running third with 32.

Bata, 4 other Filipinos advance

HALL OF FAMER EFREN "BATA" Reyes led four other Filipinos in the winners' bracket of the 2006 Enjoypool.com 9-Ball Championship (formerly BCA Open) at the Riviera Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The 51-year-old Reyes beat American Lou Butera, 11-9, in the opener, towing along compatriots Dennis Orcollo, Jose Parica, Santos Sambajon and Rodolfo Luat.

Reyes, fresh off his victory in the 2006 SMB Asian 9-ball Tour leg in Vietnam, will meet American Allen Hopkins in the next round.

Orcollo, gold medalist in the 2005 Southeast Asian Games, bested former world trick-shot champion Fabio Petroni of Italy, 11-5, and will face American Tony Crosby, 11-7 winner over Evan Broxmeyer.

Parica trounced former US champion Nick Varner, 11-8, and Canadian No. 2 player Luc Salvas, 11-6, while Sambajon nipped Joey Korsiak, 11-7. *Marlon Bernardino*

MVBA: Lhuillier tackles Toyota

GAME TODAY *(New Cebu City Coliseum)*
5:30 p.m.—M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu vs Toyota-Iloilo Warriors

GAME TOMORROW *(Mandaue City Sports Complex)*
5:30 p.m.—Mantawi Traders vs Cebu Landmaster-Toledo

CEBU CITY—UNDEFEATED TOP SEED M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu begins its championship drive when it hosts Toyota-Iloilo in Game One of their best-of-three semifinal series in the ML Kwarta Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference today at the New Cebu City Coliseum.

The Jewelers of Michel Lhuillier and Coach Raul Alcoseba, however, will be without top gun Stephen Padilla, who was recalled to the PBA.

Tomorrow, the Mantawi Traders of Mayor Thadeo Ouano and coach Eddie Ybañez host the Cebu Landmaster-Toledo of realtor Joe Soberano and coach Jun Tan in Game Two of their Visayas Division semifinal series in Mandaue City.

Both squads were still playing their series opener at press time. The game was made possible by ML Kwarta Padala, Cokaliong Shipping Lines, Nature's Spring Drinking Water, Panasonic, Molten and Sulpicio Lines.

2006 Tour can't quench the original thirst

BARE EYE

Recab Trinidad

(SALUTE: The great sportsman Leo Prieto, founding commissioner of the Philippine Basketball Association, celebrates his birthday on Friday. Accomplished people who had served under Mr. Prieto, including television impresario Bobong Velez and lawyer Rudy Salud, founding sec-gen of the World Boxing Council and himself a very successful PBA commissioner, extend best wishes to their former mentor and big boss. We salute you, sir.)

* * *

WARREN DAVADILLA, DEFENDING CHAMPion, is very much in the race. How come the 2006 Tour, given the crispy label Padyak Pinoy Road Cycling championship, has not sizzled hot as the marathon bike races of past summers?

Because it lacks the big ingredients, swears a former champion who joined this year's cycling caravan before breaking off after only three days.

He says he finds the current Tour, now sponsored by Tanduay, deprived of the old kick, juice and glitter.

But isn't Davadilla, seeking his third title, not big enough to inject the big challenge and excitement into the field?

Well, he explains, Padyak Pinoy doesn't happen to be the Tour de France and Davadilla is definitely no Lance Armstrong, seven-time winner of the world's toughest multi-staged cycling marathon.

* * *

Our friend, a former two-time winner of the Tour in the '70s, begs that his name no longer be mentioned here.

He explains that race organizers, who happen to be his friends, did not want it to appear that the sponsors were not getting their money's worth in this year's race.

Sorry, but that's exactly what's happening in the 2006 Tour. Sponsors have every reason to feel shortchanged.

Despite the glowing prose of sports scribes from all the national dailies, this year's Tour could not live up to old expectations.

At least, the event did not consume itself and the overall title has remained anybody's race after the usually conclusive Baguio stages.

There'll still be something worthy of the chase, our friend adds, when the race goes through the so-called Tatlong Sungay, a mysterious and hitherto untried uphill stretch.

* * *

But, going to the winning ingredients, it appears the 2006 Tour has started to lose its novelty this early due to the absence of several tried-and-tested stars.

Most of these power riders, reports our friend, like the members of the Pagcor team, failed to join the two-day qualifying race because they were out competing in Malaysia's Tour de Langkawi.

Singled out among the missing stars in the 2006 Tour were: Victor Espiritu, Lloyd Reynante, Bernard Luzon, Albert Primero and Sherwin Carrera. 2004 Tour Pilipinas champion Rhyan Tanguilig is also now in the Middle East working.

That's a hefty field indeed, as big maybe as one limb of the Tour itself.

Actually, this discrepancy should have been remedied for the Tour to retain its original color and excitement.

Now, it doesn't help any that crucial truth is being hidden from both the sponsors and the public.

* * *

There's a grave danger here. If they are not exposed and subsequently checked, these flaws could lead to the summer spectacle again disintegrating, as had happened when the Tour was abruptly stricken out of the annual sports calendar starting in 1999 until its revival in 2003.

There's an urgent plea from concerned sectors.

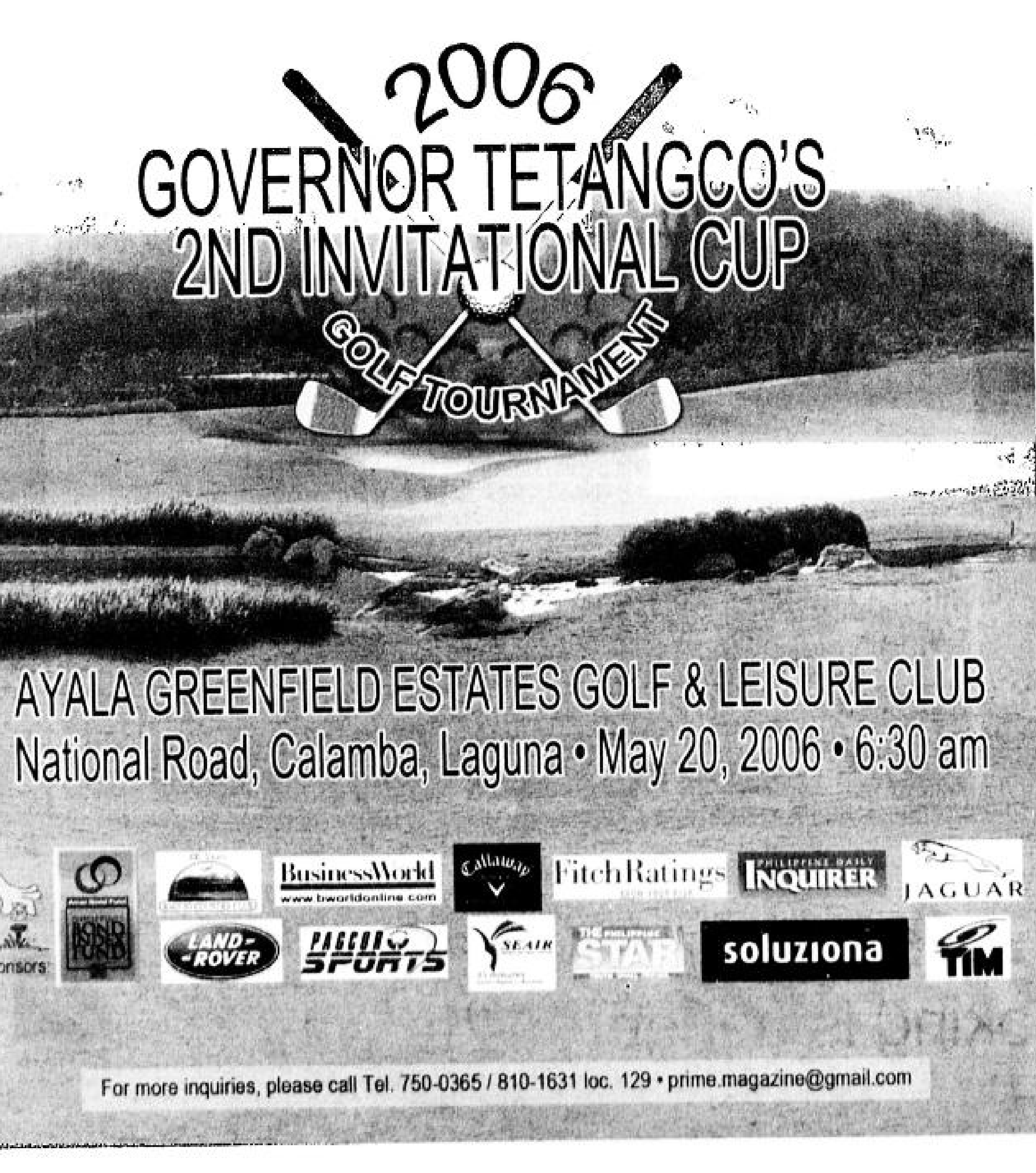
They should prevent another decimated, if not entirely lame, marathon bike race.

Yes, the flaw in the current Tour may not be as serious and sickening as the rampant cheating that has been confirmed by the DepEd in the recent Palarong Pambansa.

But to countless hopeful souls out in the remote provinces, one year without a Tour could be equal to being jilted.

Dreams, although only seasonal, should not be allowed to slip and fade.

Summer without a colorful Tour could be empty and lonely as a loveless summer.



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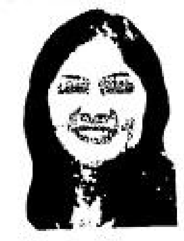
On Eugene's bedside

IN HUDDLE



Beth Celis

THE WHOLE PUREfoods basketball team was at Eugene Tejada's bedside Monday afternoon at the Makati Medical Center where the cager was undergoing a battery of tests to determine the extent of his spinal injury.

The freak accident that occurred during the last quarter of the game against Red Bull last Sunday initially rendered his body numb, immobilized from the neck down to his toes. It took 40 minutes before he could be transported to the hospital for treatment because there was no standby ambulance assigned to the Ynares Center.

"I didn't want to have him moved unless it was done by paramedics because it might aggravate his injury. Never mind if we had to forfeit the game. A life's at stake here," said Purefoods board representative Rene Pardo, who is set to retire from his post at month's end.

Mang Pards said that in disgust he almost kicked a dilapidated mattress which was brought to the court, in place of a stretcher, to move Eugene out so the game could continue.

It didn't help any that PBA commissioner Noli Eala was not around when the career-threatening accident—the worst I've seen since the inception of the league in 1975—occurred. He had left the venue early, probably tired from his protracted vacation in Boracay where he was stranded for days.

* * *

According to Mang Pards, the result of the MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) revealed a fracture and a dislocation in Tejada's spinal column, near the area of the neck. Applying traction has somewhat improved the sensory functions of his upper limbs and body.

The doctors have yet to determine if surgery is indicated, pending further tests.

Upon being apprised of the tragic accident, the Fil-Am's parents who are based in San Francisco, California, immediately booked a flight to Manila. Eugene's father is a former cager himself while his mother is a nurse.

Also constantly at Eugene's bedside is his girlfriend Jenny Hernandez, who works with ABS-CBN.

"*Kuwento nga ni* Jenny, *madalas daw sabihin sa kanya ni* Eugene lately *that he's* homesick and misses his family in America very much. I suppose that's what Eugene has been feeling after the accident, *kasi parati siyang umiiyak*," Mang Pards related.

* * *

Jake Aspiras, a supporter of mountaineer Dale Abenojar, denied reports the other day that the climber has abandoned his quest to reach the summit of Mt. Everest.

"Speculations that Dave had quit must have started when he crossed paths with the expedition leader of the 7 Summits Club. *Dinaanan lang siya, ni hindi huminto para makipagkuwentuhan. Si Dale lang ang bumati. Yun lang.* Soon after, word spread like wildfire that Dale had quit," Jake explained.

As of yesterday, Dale was 8,400 meters up on the slopes of Everest, ready to start his assault of the summit. So was Romi Garduce, on the opposite side of the mountain.

"If everything goes well, Dale should be able to conclude his conquest of Everest by this week," Jake said.

* * *

Vince Fran of La Salle Green Hills and Kevin John Gamboa of Ateneo have been chosen by Adidas Philippines to represent the country in this year's Adidas Superstar Camp which will be staged in China's capital, Beijing, this month.

According to Adidas sports marketing head Goody Custodio, the two belonged to a select group culled from among hundreds of candidates. They were chosen on the recommendation of coaches.

"They belong to the cream of the crop," Goody said.

This year, the world representatives will be shown the way to strength and fitness. "Adidas has a different theme every year. Playing stronger and longer is the theme this year," Goody said.

SPORTSWATCH

70 fights at SJC today

THE BATTLE FOR THE GENTLEMEN COCKERS ASsociation of the Philippines (GCAP) Cocker of the Year title heats up today with the staging of another 5-cock derby at the San Juan Coliseum. The 70-fight program is sponsored by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. Rep. Butch Pichay and Rey Briones, with their entry Spartan's Pichay, remained the pacesetter with 24.5 points. Jun Topacio and his American partner Gene Batiea of Missisipi (JT Emerald) have 24 points.

Makati hosts 3-cocker

MAKATI COLISEUM'S COCKFIGHTING EVENTS resume today via a special 3-cock derby featuring 60 fights. Sponsor is B-Meg Derby Ace. A guaranteed prize of P200,000 will go the winners of the event being hosted by the WTJ Sports and Amusement Corp. Entry fee is P5,500. Last Monday, the Madlambayan brothers of Pampanga topped the Bacolor Gold 5-cock derby when their entry Clear Cut racked up five wins. For inquiries, call 896-3545 or 895-6475.

LYN Mangulabnan of Royal Northwoods plays out of a stymie at the Eagle Ridge Golf Club. ERIK ARAZAS

De Jesus, Yee pull biggest NTCC wins

MATCHES TODAY (8 a.m.)

LADIES: Cyna Rodriguez (Riviera) vs Maan Legaspi (Capitol Hills), Matet Salvio (Aguinaldo) vs Vinice Godio (Sta. Elena/Alabang), Kwon Ye Seul (Eagle Ridge) vs Beachie Abiera (Alabang/Tagaytay Midlands), Kathleen Uy (Cebu) vs Lyn Mangulabnan (Royal Northwoods)

MEN: Venjo Reyes (Manila Golf) vs Zaldy Villa (Valley), Toosie de Jesus (Tagaytay Highlands) vs Oliver Gan (Tagaytay Midlands), Edmund Yee (Manila Southwoods) vs Indren Naidoo (Alabang), Jan Tambogon (Eagle Ridge) vs park Jong Soo (Eastridge)

By Jong Arcano

GEN. TRIAS, CAVITE—**TOOTSIE DE JESUS OF Tagaytay Highlands and Edmund Yee of Manila Southwoods eked out a pair of victories each yesterday to barge into the quarterfinals even as top seeds Venjo Reyes and Cyna Rodriguez stayed on track in the National Tournament of Club Champions at the Faldo course of the Eagle Ridge Golf and Country Club here.**

De Jesus, once a top badminton player who finished seeding round Monday at a lowly No. 13, made short-work of Baguio bet and No. 20 Bill Lawrence, 7 and 6, in the morning then produced the biggest upset of the tournament co-presented by Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. and INQUIRER Golf by ousting second seed Kim Yee-youen of Mimosa, 3 and 2.

Yee disposed of Val Plata of Summit Point, 3 and 2, in his first match. He went back to his hotel room, took a quick lunch and got his second wind in time to show the door to Kim in a surprising 7 and 6 bloodbath.

Zaldy Villa of Valley also shone, stunning pre-tournament favorite, Miko Yee, 1 up.

The other top guns advanced, however, with Reyes of Manila Golf shrugging off a gutsy Rudy Amata of Villamor, 3 and 1, and his counterpart in the ladies division, Rodriguez of Riviera, earning the quickest win of the day: a 9 and 7 rout of Iloilo's Maggie Riviera.

Also reaching the round-of-8 were No. 2 Park Jong-soo of Eastridge, Oliver Gan of Tagaytay Midlands, Indren Naidoo of Alabang and Jan Tambogon of Eagle Ridge.

The other survivors in the ladies action were Maan Legaspi of Capitol, Matet Salivio of Aguinaldo, Vinice Godio of Alabang and Sta. Elena, Beachie Abiera of Southwoods/TM, Kwon Ye-seul of Eagle Ridge, Kathleen Uy of Cebu CC and Lyn Mangulabnan of Royal Northwoods.

Abiera owned the day's biggest comeback as she rallied from four down to beat Pegels, 2 and 1.

Bernis shows way with 71; Villaroman up by 1

JUN BERNIS FIRED A STEADY ONE-under par 71 and then watched Paul Echavez hole out with a bogey to seize a one-stroke lead at the start of the second leg of the Samsung Amateur Golf Tour at the Summit Point and Country Club in Lipa City.

Bernis, trying to regain the form that won him two major titles in 2004, birdied back to back from No. 3 but dropped a stroke on No. 7. The soft-spoken Canlubang standout settled for pars the rest of the way for nines of 35-36.

Echavez birdied No. 17 to catch up with Bernis at one-under, only to fall back again with that bogey on the 18th.

South Korean Kim Jong-wook also stayed within striking distance with a 73.

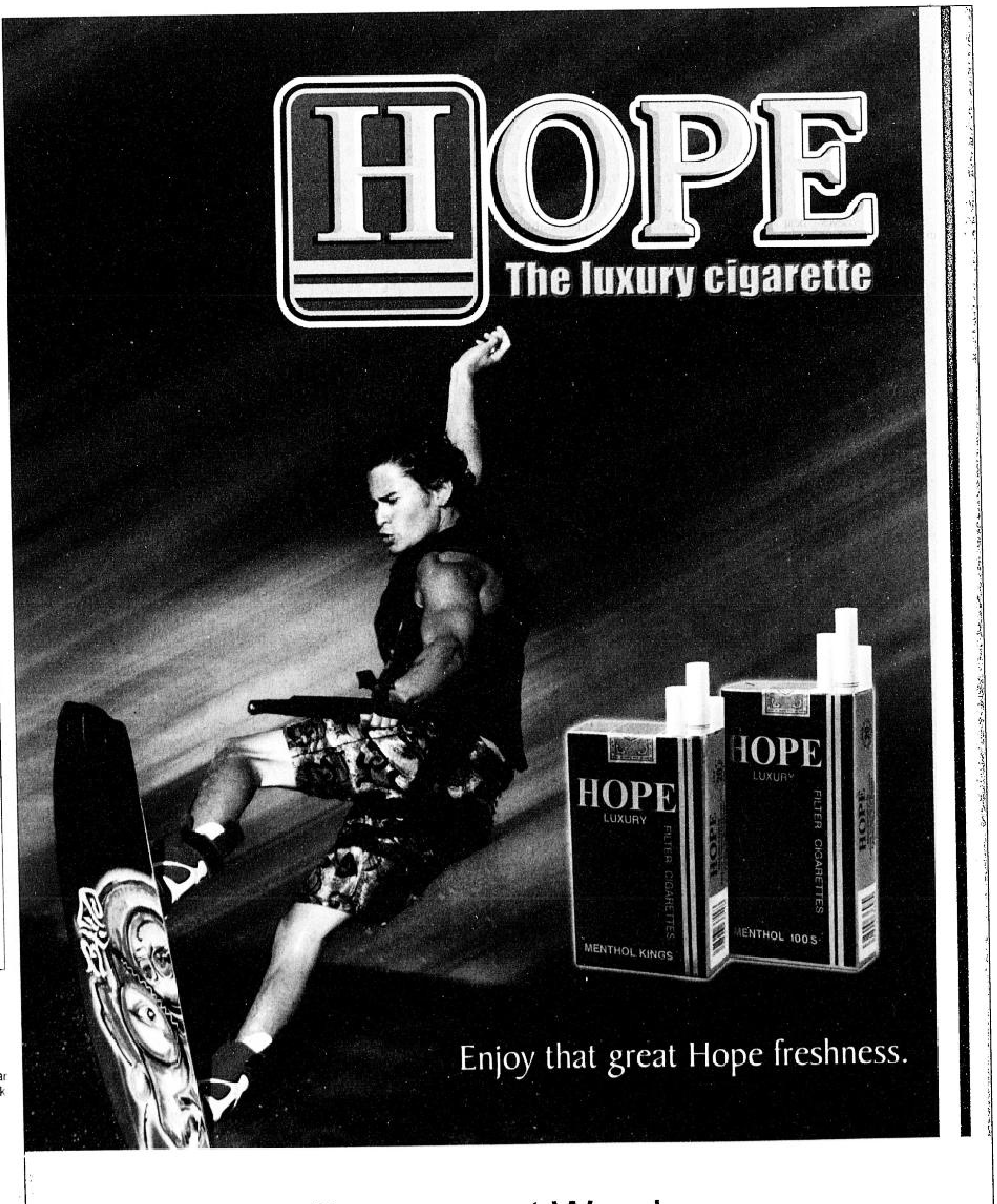
Former RP Ladies champion Carmelette Villaroman shot a 76 to likewise post a one-stroke lead over defending national titlist Beverly Mendoza in the ladies division.

Lucy Landico made a 79 for third.

Gary Sales carded a 74 for fourth among men while National Caddies Open champ Joseph Labajo put to naught a 35 going out with a 40 coming in for 75, in a tie with Gino Bunyi.

Grace Superal, meanwhile, carded an 81 to gain a two-shot lead over Beth Menchavez and four up on Lee Sun Ae in Class B, while Inez del Rosario showed the way in Class C with a 96 for a three-stroke lead over Felicia Medalla, who had a 99. Mary Dohiling and Josie Amon were tied for third with 101s.

In men's Class C, William McCaw and Pepe Mendoza both shot 82s to share a two-shot lead, while Rolando Bool sizzled with an 86 to lead Class D by five.



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Cavs tie series

Mavericks push defending champs Spurs to the edge

CLEVELAND, OHIO—THE CLEVELAND CAVALIERS BEAT THE Detroit Pistons at their own game on Monday, using a smothering defense to win Game Four 74-72 and level their Eastern Conference best-of-seven series at 2-2.

LeBron James had 22 points, nine assists and eight rebounds and made two of four free throws as time ticked down. Game Five is on Wednesday in Auburn Hills.

In Dallas, Jason Terry scored 32 points as the Mavericks beat the San Antonio Spurs, 123-118, in overtime, putting the defending NBA champions on the verge of elimination.

Dallas leads the Western Conference series, 3-1, with Game Five in that series back in San Antonio on Wednesday.

Detroit carried a 59-53 lead into the fourth quarter, but the Cavaliers played some of their best defense of the series and outscored the Pistons 21-13 in the final quarter to steal the win.

The Pistons led by as many as seven early in the fourth quarter, but a 12-0 Cleveland run paved the way for the win, with James getting two chances for two free throws with 1:02 left and again with just 1.3 seconds left on the clock.

"The Pistons are feeling the pressure," James told reporters after the game.

After two relatively easy wins in the opening two games of the series, the Pistons find themselves in a battle against the underdog Cavs.

Rasheed Wallace, who had guaranteed a win for his Pistons, sprained his right ankle and watched the last few minutes from the bench, but was confident despite the loss.

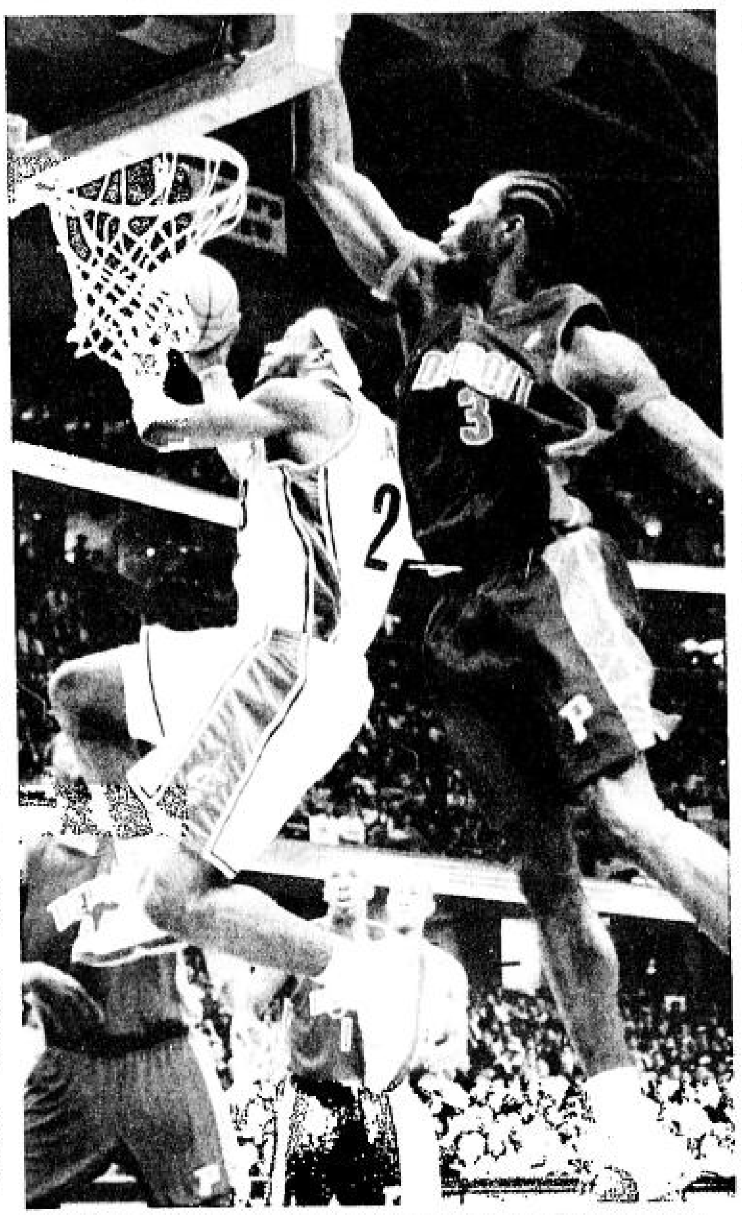
"There's no way in hell they beat us in a series," Wallace said. "They played well. I give them credit. We lost."

Eric Snow had 12 points for the Cavaliers—10 of them in the second half—and Anderson Varejao added 10 more.

The Cavaliers fly to St. Louis on Tuesday to attend the funeral of Larry Hughes' 20-year-old brother Justin before going on to Detroit. Hughes has missed the Cavs' last two games to be with his family.

In Dallas, the Mavericks finally prevailed in a game that was tied 20 times and featured eight lead changes during regulation. *Reuters*

NBA on TV
SOLAR SPORTS—New Jersey vs Miami (8 a.m.)
SPORTSPLUS—LA Clippers vs Phoenix (10:30 a.m.)



LEBRON James (left) of the Cleveland Cavaliers tries to put up a shot against Ben Wallace (right) of the Detroit Pistons. REUTERS

WORLD CUP

Argentina leaves off '02 'losers'

LONDON—GONE ARE ARGENTINA'S 2002 losers, tainted by the debacle in Asia four years ago, and in come Jose Pekerman's junior champions.

Coach Pekerman, who had already turned a cold shoulder to 2002 captain Juan Sebastian Veron, left out former defense stalwarts Javier Zanetti and Walter Samuel when he named his World Cup squad on Monday.

He picked a squad littered instead with players who have won the World Youth Cup or the Olympic Games gold—and in some cases both.

"This is a very strong group. There's a historic potential and that's because of the richness of Argentine football," Pekerman told a news conference in Buenos Aires when he named his squad.

The only players in Pekerman's squad who went to Asia in 2002 under his predecessor Marcelo Bielsa are Roberto Ayala, who saw no action in his second World Cup because of injury, midfielders Pablo Aimar and Juan Pablo Sorin, both key figures in Pekerman's successful junior teams, and striker Hernan Crespo, a reserve in Japan.

Pekerman's new guard, looking to win the World Cup for Argentina for the third time, is led by Sorin and Juan Roman Riquelme. *Reuters*

UEFA final on ESPN

Meanwhile another marquee matchup beckons with European club soccer's most glittering prize at stake.

Spanish powerhouse Barcelona clashes with English side Arsenal as the UEFA Champions League Finals goes underway tomorrow at 2 a.m. live and exlusive on ESPN.

Arsenal booked its place in the Champions League final with a 1-0 aggregate win over Spain's Villareal. Barcelona is the odds-on favorite to lift the trophy behind World Footballer of the Year Ronaldinho.

Angping bats for new Asaphil election, Open

IT WAS HARRY ANGPING'S TURN AT bat yesterday.

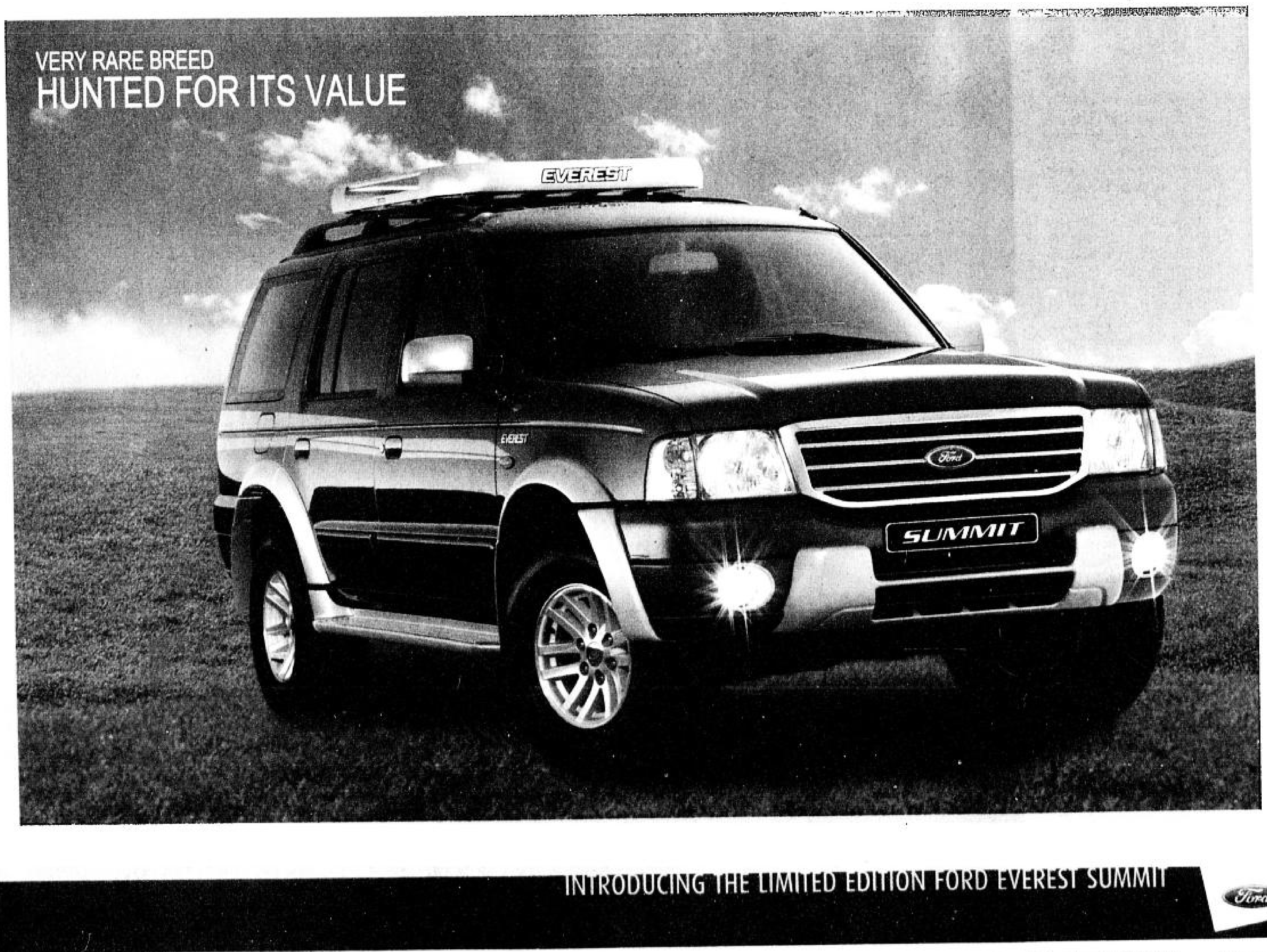
Branding the recent elections of the Amateur Softball Association of the Philippines as "illegal, null and void," Angping said he's still the Asaphil president and will call for another national election and national open next month.

The former Manila congressman, who has been "ousted" by a faction of the Asaphil, which elected former Asaphil chief Mario Raymundo back in the post, said the national open and the elections are set June 9-12 at the Rosario Sports Complex in Pasig City.

Angping, however, said, he will no longer run for another term and instead nominated businessman Jean Henri Lhuillier to take his post.

"Due to the recent developments, we have decided to move the national open to give everybody the chance to participate," said Angping.

Angping, who became Asaphil president in 2002, dubbed the coming national open, as the Philippine Independence Cup, adding that it would involve at least a dozen teams.



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'Are you a maid?'

By Nini Valera

DONITA Rose

THIS IS ONE QUESTION THAT FORMER MTV VJ Donita Rose has to answer almost every time she boards a cab in Singapore where she and her husband, Eric Villarama, and their son Joshua Paul reside.

"I have to explain to the cab driver that not all Filipinas in Singapore are maids," she said. "It happens to me so often (being mistaken for a maid), that I no longer get offended."

Donita, 32, has been shuttling between Singapore and Manila for eight years now, but it was only after she got married, three years ago, that she became a permanent resident of the island nation. The Villaramas now own a flat in one of the private developments there.

As permanent residents, the family enjoys "perks" from the government, including the Central Provident Fund: 18 percent of one's earnings go to a sort of government trust (and matched by the government) as a form of forced savings or retirement fund.

"That's [good] for my family," said Donita. "I strongly believe in saving for the future."

It's neither a perfect life, nor one that's mostly easy. Like most Filipinos living in Singapore, Donita has experienced some form of discrimination.

"Oh, we've had our share of that," she said, speaking for her husband as well as for herself. "Even when I was still with MTV, some

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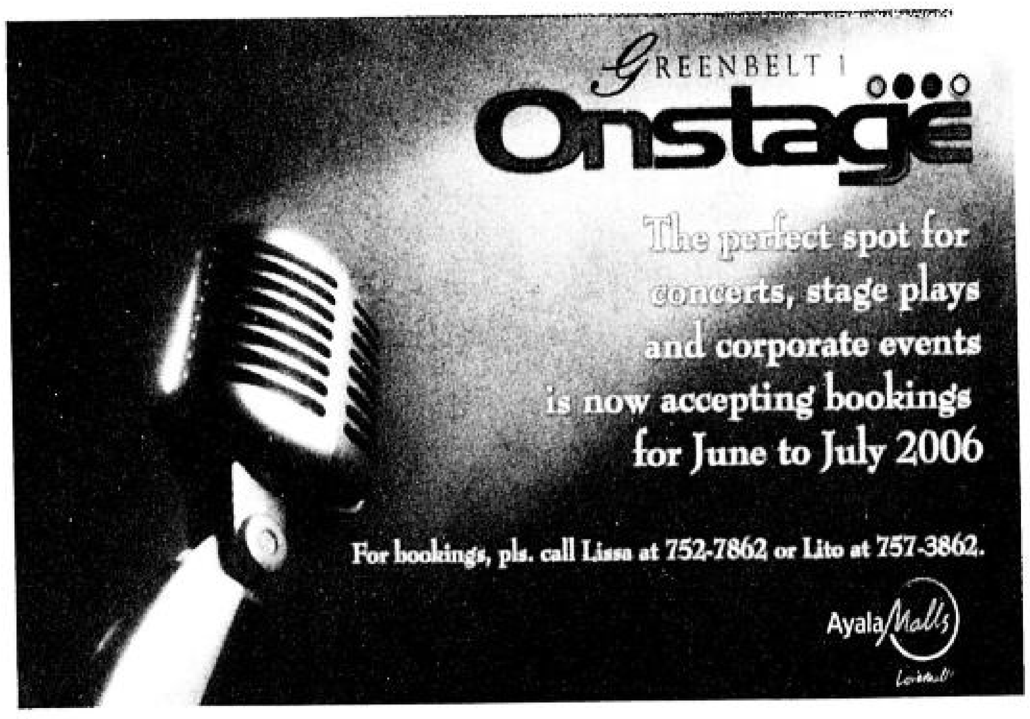

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4 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
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2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	11:00 1:45 4:30 7:15 10:00
3 REINCARNATION	1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
4 POSEIDON	11:40 2:00 4:20 6:40 9:00
5 POSEIDON	12:10 2:30 4:50 7:10 9:30
6 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
7 AQUAMARINE	12:10 2:35 5:00 7:25 9:50
8 SILENT HILL	2:00 4:40 7:20
9 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
10 SLITHER	1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

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1 POSEIDON	11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 10:00
2 SLITHER	12:20 2:20 4:20 6:20 8:25 10:00
3 SILENT HILL	12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 9:50
4 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR	12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
5 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00
6 REINCARNATION	12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50
7 POSEIDON	12:00 2:10 4:20 6:40 9:00

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1 SLITHER	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	11:20 1:50 4:20 6:50 9:15
3 SUBMERGED	1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:00
4 AQUAMARINE	11:25 1:50 4:15 6:40 9:05
5 SILENT HILL	1:30 4:30 6:10 9:00
6 POSEIDON	12:10 2:10 4:10 6:10 8:10
7 POSEIDON	11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 9:10
8 REINCARNATION	1:20 3:40 6:00 8:20

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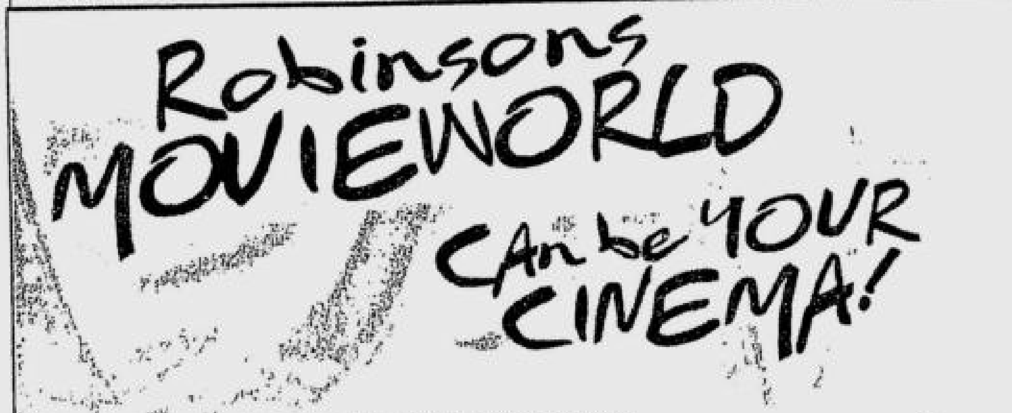

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4 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
5 APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
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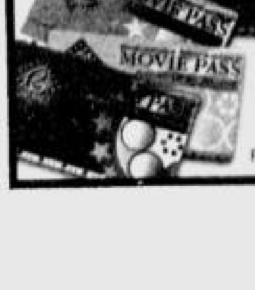

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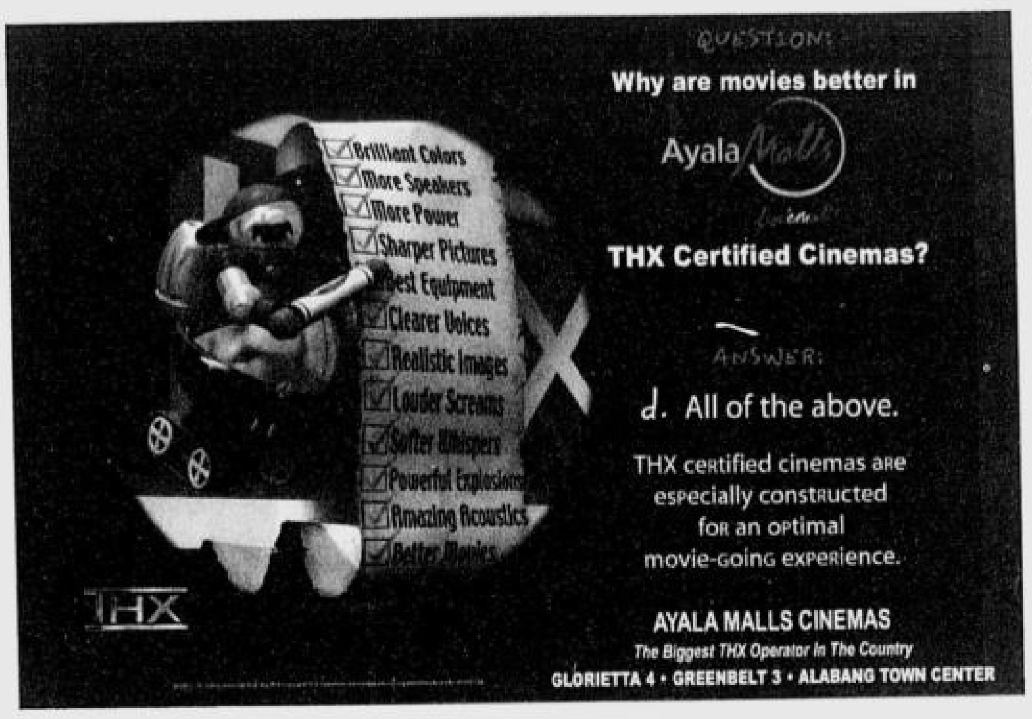
It has happened to her so many times, Donita says, that she no longer gets offended



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2	TRISTAN & ISOLDE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790

1	TUKSO
2	POSEIDON
3	SLITHER
4	M I - 3

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029

1	MISSION IMPOSIBLE-3
2	APOY SA DIBDIB

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

'Are you . . .

From page A2-1

people looked down on me."

But to her about 136,000 compatriots there, Donita—an actress and TV personality before she became a VJ—has clearly become a pleasant reminder of the country they left behind, if not altogether an inspiration.

She related an incident when a cab driver took her to a shopping mall near the park one Sunday, a day off for most Filipino maids. "I was not yet so popular then as a VJ. But when I stepped out of the cab, Filipinos recognized me and started calling my name. Hundreds of them rushed to come near me. I got scared. I thought there was going to be a stampede. Call me *mayabang* or what. But that's what I thought would happen. So I jumped back into the cab and had the driver take me some place else."

Sadness

Through all the excitement, Donita said, she had felt their sadness. It was a sadness she knew well, and one that she still feels every time she's away from home. Since she became host of GMA 7's "Mobile Kusina," for example, Donita had not seen her family for a month.

"I miss my son very much," she admitted. "My husband sends me pictures everyday. Plus, I web chat with him at the end of each day [so] it's been bearable."

Today, father and son are expected to arrive in Manila, and Donita is looking forward to that. "We've postponed mother's day to next Sunday," she said. "We're celebrating it on the show; Eric will be my guest. We'll both be cooking."

Salad freak

Donita, a confessed a salad freak, said she's excited about the concoctions that she and Eric are serving up for the show. She confessed that she learned to really cook only after getting married, outside of occasional forays into the kitchen as a young girl.

She recalled, "I would save my allowance and cook something—usually American food—for the family for a special occasion. Since then, I've experimented a lot. But I've learned much in Singapore. I used to need cookbooks; now, I can do away with them."

Binay, Biazon...

From page A2-6

firmed that she'll soon tie the knot with her badminton instructor Wilfredo "Jun" Hinahon.

Just what kooky Ai-Ai needs: A man whose name literally means "calm."

Cloud nine

At a press con—okay this is two years ago but it still bears recounting—the inimitable Melanie Marquez praised a colleague: "He has cloud in the industry!"

Silence.

"You know? Cloud!"

ENTERTAINMENT

OPENING THIS WEEK

The Da Vinci Code

Stars Tom Hanks, Audrey Tautou, Ian McKellen, Jean Reno
Directed by Ron Howard

Based on Dan Brown's worldwide bestseller that has sold 20 million copies and has been translated into 42 languages, this suspense thriller has sparked as much interest as controversy. Producer Brian Grazer reports that he has received "numerous suggestions and warnings from… fans not to compromise the novel's integrity… specifically, not to water down the conspiracy at its center." Critics have denounced the movie as "poisonous fuel for anti-Catholic sentiment."

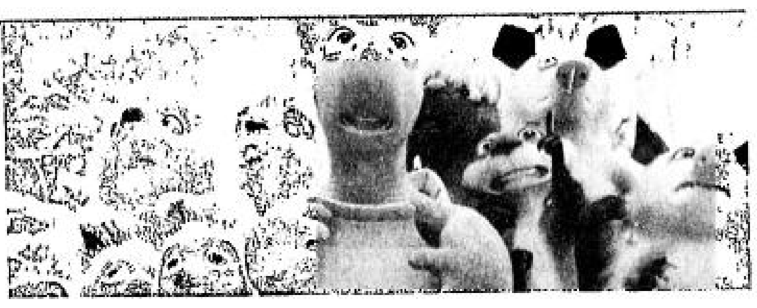
All this noise for a murder mystery? A Louvre curator is killed, jump-starting an investigation that can lead a symbologist (Hanks) and a cryptographer (Tautou) to "uncover a secret that has been protected since the days of Christ."

Richard Horgan of www.filmstew.com says, "People love a good detective story. In essence, it is the very idea of 'Da Vinci Code' that offends people." The movie is supposed to open today, but Columbia Pictures says… "within the week."

Over the Hedge

With the voices of Bruce Willis, Garry Shandling, William Shatner, Allison Janney
Directed by Tim Johnson and Karey Kirkpatrick

Yet another CG creature-cartoon from the Dreamworks factory, this one has an environmental message. A clan of critters (porcupines, possums, a squirrel, skunk, tortoise and chipmunk) wakes up from a winter slumber, only to discover their forest turned into a suburban housing project. A "rascally" raccoon agitates and organizes the dispossessed animals, who strike back by raiding the humans' food supply. Naturally, the humans put up their own offensive fight back, resulting in merry mayhem. Kirk Honeycutt of Hollywood Reporter describes it as "chirpy fun." Todd McCarthy of Variety is unimpressed: "[It] lacks the inventiveness, wit and sense of delight that have distinguished" previous movies of this genre. Joshua Tyler of Cinemablend.com thinks it's "cute, clever… succinct and sweet." Opens May 19.



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NOW SHOWING

Cinema	Movie	Times	Rating
1	POSEIDON	12:00, 2:20, 4:40, 7:00, 9:20	PG13
2	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	10:50, 1:30, 4:10, 6:50, 9:30	PG13

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

PROMENADE
GREENHILLS
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NOW SHOWING

Cinema	Movie	Times	Rating
3	POSEIDON	10:30, 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50, 10:10	PG13
4	POSEIDON	11:10, 1:30, 3:50, 6:10, 8:30, 10:50	PG13
5	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	11:45, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30	PG13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

MUSIC MUSEUM

Date	Show	Time
May 27, 2006	ERIK MANA	8:00PM
EVERY FRI. & SAT. OF JUNE	NINA in VERY MANILOW	9:00PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

Date	Show	Time
EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00PM
MAY 26 & 27 2006	WERE STILL HOT "THE MUSICAL" FOR INQUIRIES PLS CALL 722-4532 LOC 116	8:00PM

FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL : 721-6726 OR 721-0635

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Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41
DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND-EX

POSEIDON PG13 2:25,4:45,7:05,9:25	POSEIDON PG13 1:40,4:00,6:20,8:40	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 PG13 12:45,3:30,6:15,9:00
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 PG13 1:45,4:30,7:15,10:00	AQUAMARINE G 2:20,4:40,7:00,9:20	POSEIDON PG13 12:50,3:10,5:30, 7:50,10:10

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MTRCB RATING R-13
SILENT HILL

glorietta GREENBELT ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU MARKET! MARKET! Ayala Malls

AT THE CINEMAS

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Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 POSEIDON	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	3 REINCARNATION	4 POSEIDON
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 11:50, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30	2 POSEIDON	3 THX POSEIDON 12:45, 3:00, 5:15, 7:30, 9:45 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 AQUAMARINE	5 SILENT HILL	6 POSEIDON	7 POSEIDON
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	2 POSEIDON		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 2:15, 4:50, 7:25, 10:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX POSEIDON 3:05, 5:20, 7:35, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 POSEIDON 2:20, 4:35, 6:50, 9:05, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 POSEIDON 1:35, 3:50, 6:05, 8:20, 10:35 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3 1:15, 3:40, 6:15, 8:45, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX POSEIDON	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3		
	3 POSEIDON	4 AQUAMARINE	5 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 POSEIDON	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	3 POSEIDON	4 SUBMERGED
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 POSEIDON	2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3		
	3 REINCARNATION	4 POSEIDON	5 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3	

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Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 752 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519

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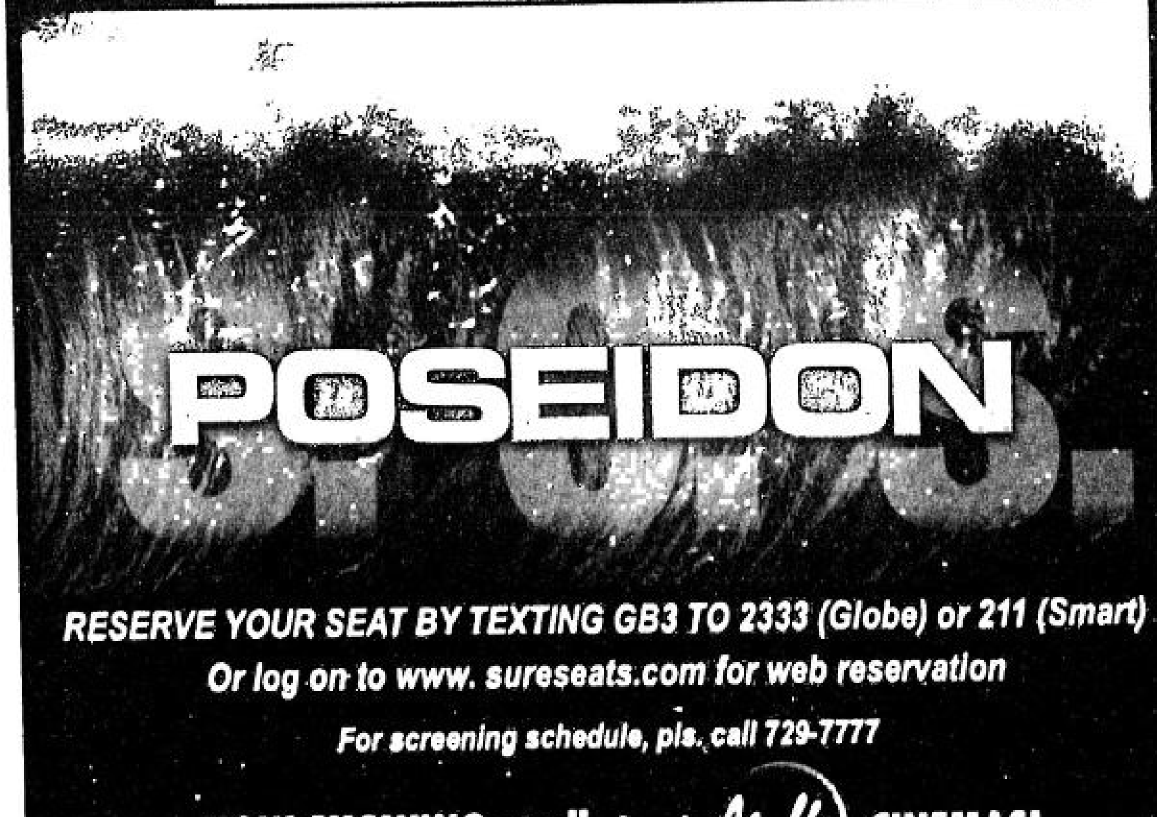

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Activity Center
Alabang Town Center
May 20, 6pm (Saturday)
Customer Service Hotline:
842-2782/ 772 1860

Glorietta Activity Center
May 21, 6pm (Sunday)
Customer Service Hotline: 752 7272

glorietta ALABANG TOWN AYALA CENTER CEBU

FEEDBACK

Pinoy in BB Australia

From Kaye (mkms_26@yahoo.com) Western Australia

One of the housemates in "Big Brother (Australia)" is Filipino. His name is Michael; he's the Big Brother "insider." He does a very good job but some people hate him—including one of the hosts of "BB Uplate," who called him a "turk."

Visit www.bigbrother.3mobile.com.au.

I wish there was a Pinoy TV in Australia, particularly here in Perth. I miss "Eat Bulaga" and other GMA 7 programs.

Too plucky for . . .

From page A2-6

enough for viewers to feel for them. This is a pity, since the movie's actors do work so hard to believably cope with all those dangers.

We also wonder why the "suicidal" character played by **Richard Dreyfuss** quickly opts to fight for his life, despite its emptiness. And the mother-son team of **Jacinda Barrett** and **Jimmy Bennett** is too plucky for comfort.

It's a good thing that Lucas and **Kurt Russell** are able to imbue their roles with sufficient fear and doubt to render them more human and flawed than the others.

They, at least, give us the feeling that we're watching flesh-and-blood people at risk, instead of survivors so ineluctably blessed by the whimsical gods of luck and pluck.

'The Lake House'

Sandra Bullock and **Keanu Reeves** are reunited in "The Lake House," a most unusual romantic movie. In the film, Dr. Kate Forester (Bullock) leaves the lovely lake house she has been renting. She leaves a note for the house's next tenant, requesting him to forward her mail to her new address. But when the new tenant, Alex Burnham (Reeves) arrives, he sees a very different picture: the lake house is dirty and overgrown with weeds. What's going on here?

As Kate and Alex continue to correspond, it becomes clear that they are, incredibly, living two years apart, each at a time in their lives when they are struggling with past disappointments and trying to make a fresh start. Will they ever bridge the psychic distance between them?

'Invincible'

More than six months after the release of his sophomore album, "Completely," **Christian Bautista** has come out with the CD's new single, "Invincible." The song has been climbing up the charts of Magic 89.9, Mellow Touch 94.7, Monster Radio RX 93.1, 97.1 WLS FM and 99.5 RT. And the video has topped both MYX and MTV charts.

'The Omen'

Kathryn Thorn (**Julia Stiles**) and her husband Robert (**Liev Schreiber**) are the adoptive parents of little Damien in "The Omen." He looks deceptively innocent, so they're unaware of the fact that he's the prophesied Anti-Christ!

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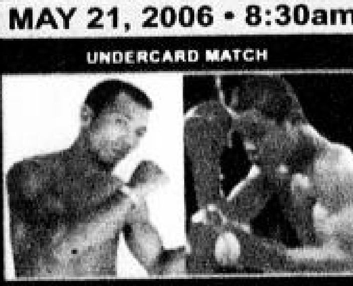

REY 'Boom-Boom' BAUTISTA
VERSUS
ROBERTO BONILLA
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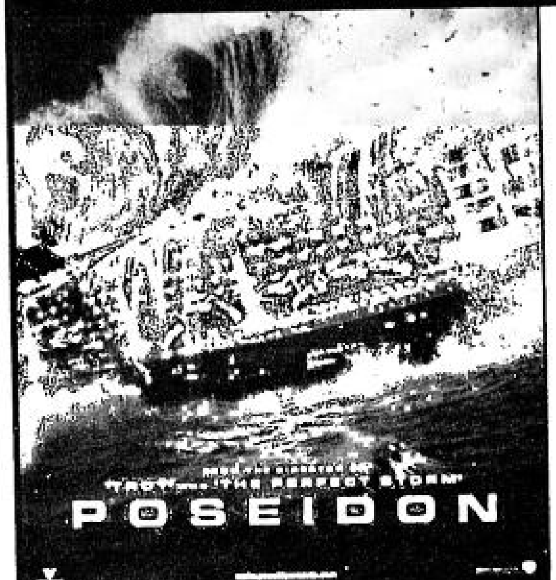
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POSEIDON

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CINEMA 2
M:i:III

SM MEGACINEMA
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SENTINEL
M:i:III
POSEIDON
AQUAMARINE
REINCARNATION
WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
D LUCKY ONES
SILENT HILL
M:i:III
THE WILD
APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR

SM NORTH EDSA
POSEIDON
SILENT HILL
REINCARNATION
M:i:III
APOY SA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
AQUAMARINE
POSEIDON
M:i:III

SM CITY DASMARINAS
M:i:III
CHINESE TALL STORY
AQUAMARINE
POSEIDON

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
AQUAMARINE
ICE AGE 2
PAMAHIIN
M:i:III
POSEIDON
SILENT HILL
POSEIDON
M:i:III
REINCARNATION
D LUCKY ONES
THE WILD
SENTINEL

SM CITY STA. MESA
POSEIDON
M:i:III
M:i:III
SILENT HILL
REINCARNATION
D LUCKY ONES
AQUAMARINE
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APOYSA DIBDIB NG SAMAR
PAMAHIIN

SM CITY BICUTAN
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POSEIDON

SM CITY SAN LAZARO
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WHEN A STRANGER CALLS
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D LUCKY ONES
PAMAHIIN
EIGHT BELOW

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
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POSEIDON
M:i:III
POSEIDON
SILENT HILL
PAMAHIIN
AQUAMARINE
REINCARNATION
D LUCKY ONES

SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA
POSEIDON
POSEIDON
M:i:III
SILENT HILL

SM CITY SUCAT
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POSEIDON

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M:i:III

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POSEIDON
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M:i:III
SENTINEL

SM CITY BACOOR
PAMAHIIN
M:i:III
POSEIDON
SILENT HILL
M:i:III
POSEIDON
D LUCKY ONES
AQUAMARINE

SM CITY BATANGAS
SILENT HILL
POSEIDON
M:i:III
TRISTAN & ISOLDE

SM CITY LUCENA
SHE'S THE MAN
M:i:III
THE WILD
POSEIDON

SM CITY CLARK
NOW OPEN!
POSEIDON
THE WILD
M:i:III
SILENT HILL
AMERICAN SOLDIER
AQUAMARINE

SM CITY PAMPANGA
M:i:III
POSEIDON
SILENT HILL'
AMERICAN SOLDIER
AQUAMARINE
PAMAHIIN

SM CITY MOLINO
M:i:III
POSEIDON
SILENT HILL
GRANDMA'S BOY

SM CITY STA. ROSA
SHE'S THE MAN
BANDIDAS
POSEIDON
M:i:III

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
M:i:III
POSEIDON
SUBMERGED
GRANDMA'S BOY
THE DARK
D LUZCKY ONES
M:i:III
POSEIDON

SM CITY ILOILO
D LUCKY ONES
RESERVED
POSEIDON
M:i:III
SUBMERGED
AQUAMARINE
RESERVED
AMERICAN SOLDIER

SM CITY DAVAO
POSEIDON
SHE'S THE MAN
D LUCKY ONES
THE WILD
BANDIDAS
M:i:III

SM CITY CAGAYAN
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SENTINEL
M:i:III

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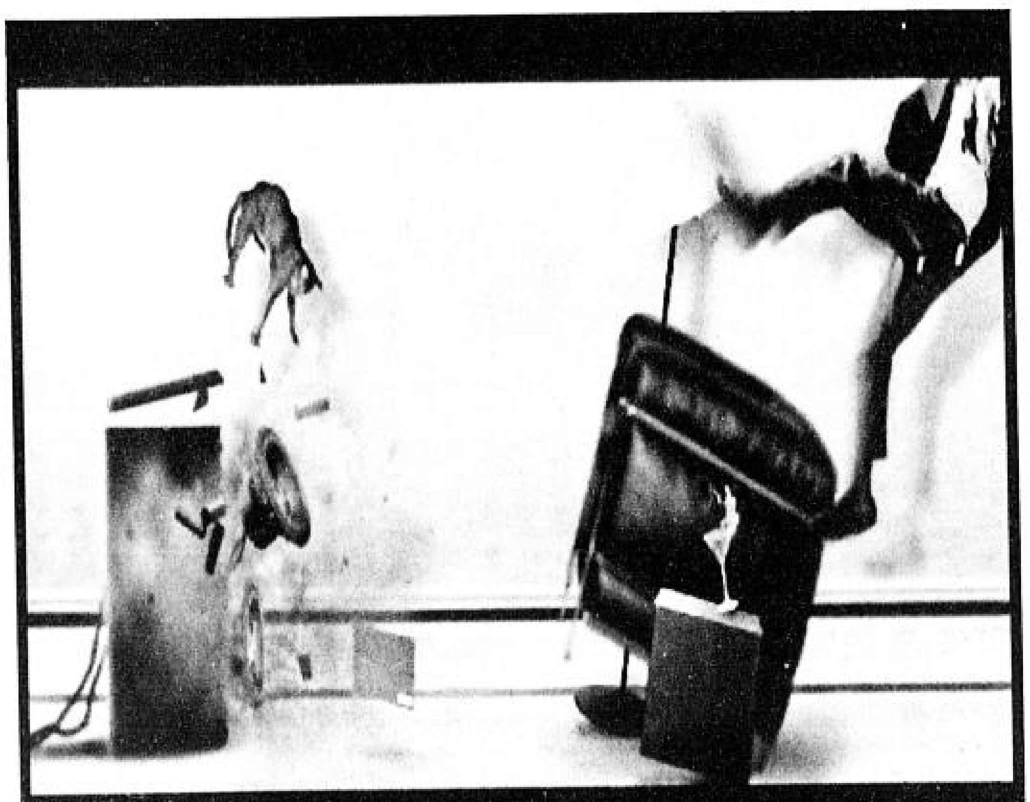
1 POSEIDON
12:10, 2:35, 5:00, 7:25, 9:50
PG-13

2 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
1:35, 4:30, 7:25, 10:30
PG-13

3 POSEIDON
12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30
PG-13

4 MISSION IMPOSSIBLE 3
12:30, 3:20, 6:10, 0:10
PG-13



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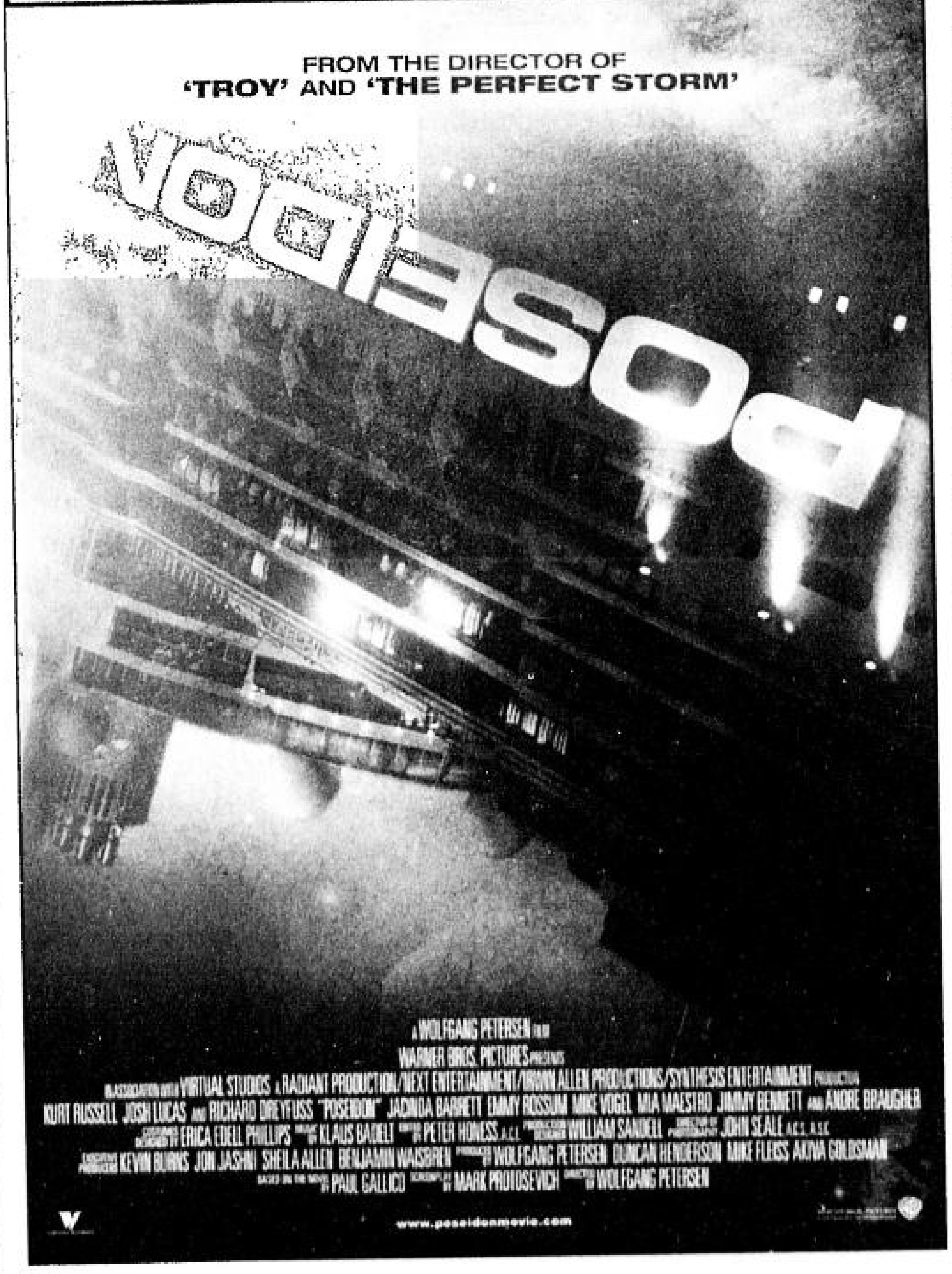
MTRCB RATING PG-13
Children below 13 yrs old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult. Strong caution due to prolonged scenes of tragedy and devastation.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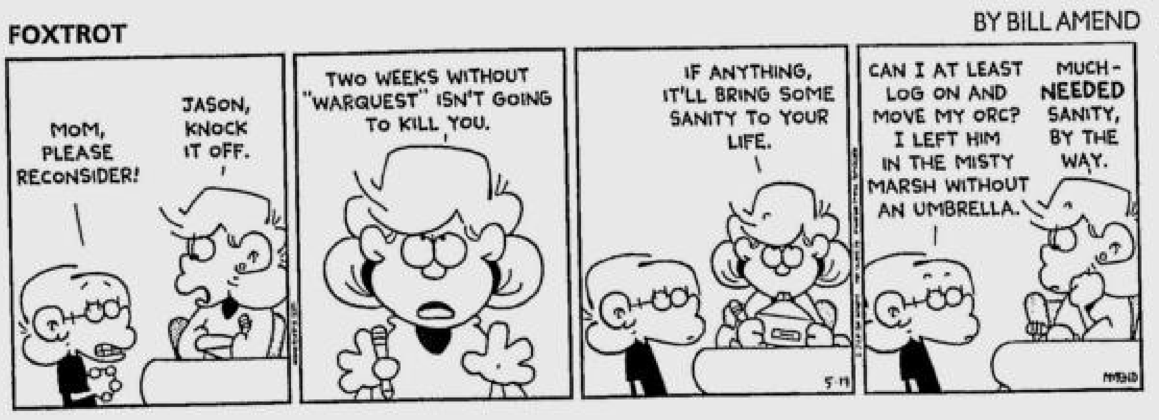
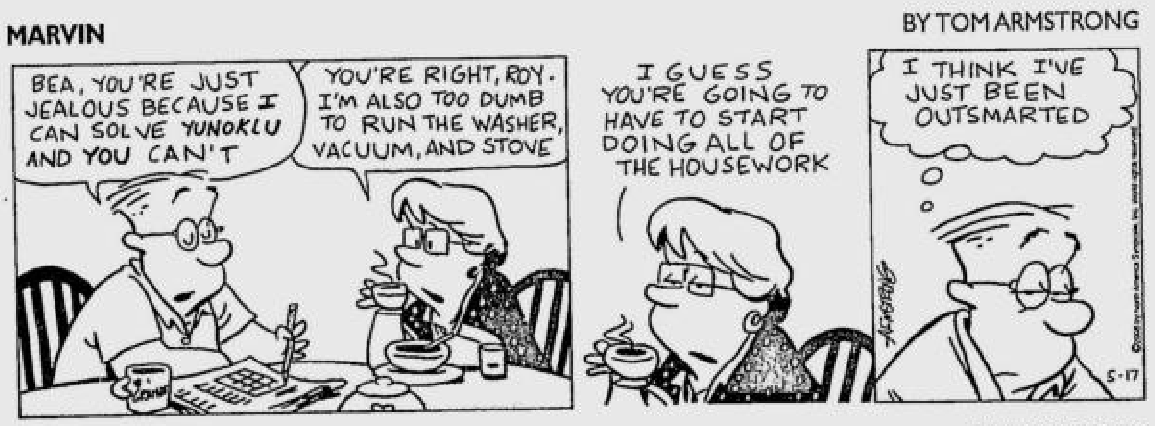
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


MOM, PLEASE RECONSIDER!
JASON, KNOCK IT OFF.
TWO WEEKS WITHOUT "WARQUEST" ISN'T GOING TO KILL YOU.
IF ANYTHING, IT'LL BRING SOME SANITY TO YOUR LIFE.
CAN I AT LEAST LOG ON AND MOVE MY ORC? I LEFT HIM IN THE MISTY MARSH WITHOUT AN UMBRELLA.
MUCH-NEEDED SANITY, BY THE WAY.
5-17

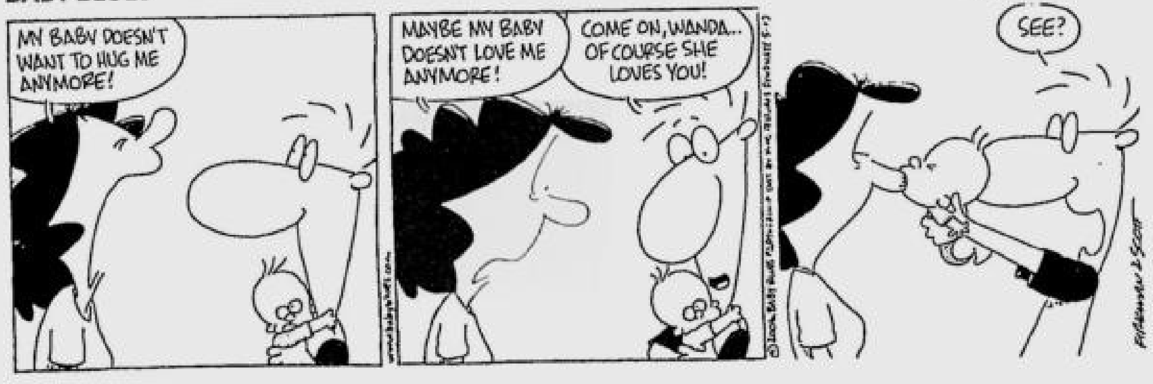
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


BEA, YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS BECAUSE I CAN SOLVE YUNOKLU AND YOU CAN'T
YOU'RE RIGHT, ROY. I'M ALSO TOO DUMB TO RUN THE WASHER, VACUUM, AND STOVE
I GUESS YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO START DOING ALL OF THE HOUSEWORK
I THINK I'VE JUST BEEN OUTSMARTED
ARMSTRONG
5-17

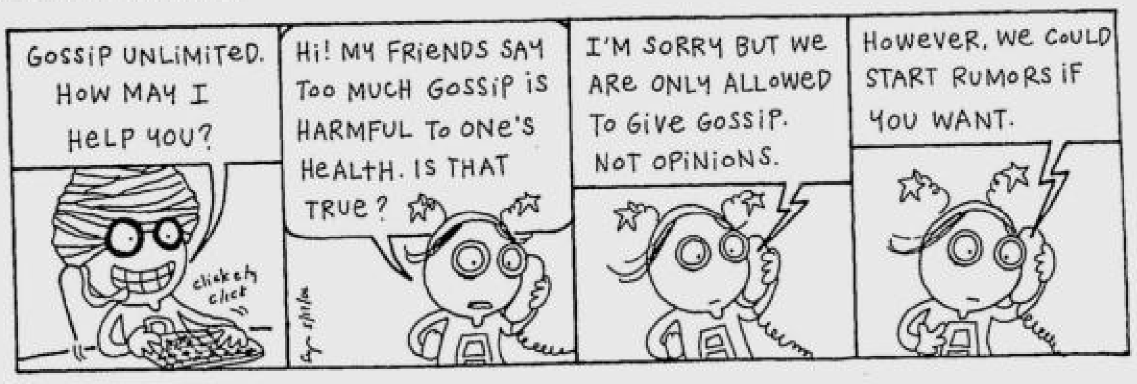
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


MY BABY DOESN'T WANT TO HUG ME ANYMORE!
MAYBE MY BABY DOESN'T LOVE ME ANYMORE!
COME ON, WANDA... OF COURSE SHE LOVES YOU!
SEE?
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


GoSSiP UNLiMiTeD. HoW MAY I HeLP YOU?
clickety click
Hi! MY FRieNDS SAY Too MUCH GoSSiP iS HARMFUL To ONe'S HeALTH. IS THAT TRUe?
I'M SoRRY BUT We ARe ONLY ALLoWeD To GiVe GoSSiP. NoT oPiNioNS.
HoweveR, We CouLD START RuMoRS iF YoU WANT.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're rebellious and outspoken. You have a heartfelt appreciation of art and beauty. You're not casual about what is important to you. You embrace your personal causes with enthusiasm. People know they can count on you. Around the age of 44, you become increasingly interested in creating a beautiful home for yourself for years. An important choice awaits you this year. Choose wisely.

Birthdate of: Bob Saget, actor; Enya, singer; Dennis Hopper, actor.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be patient with others this morning at breakfast or on the way to work. It's easy to overreact. If you do, you will likely regret it later. Today improves as it wears on.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Don't jump to conclusions this morning if others have a point of view you don't like. Let sleeping dogs lie. Late in the day, life picks up with a nice positive energy.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Conflict about shared possessions is likely this morning. "That's mine." "No it's not." "Yes it is!" "No it isn't!" Avoid these squabbles. Everything mellows out later today.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Today's Moon opposes your sign as well as fiery Mars. This could cause explosions in the morning. Your best bet is to be patient and tolerant. Demonstrate grace under pressure.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Apply yourself diligently at work today, and you will be so pleased with what you get done. In fact, you'll be downright smug.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Be patient with children early this morning and at breakfast. Anger and yelling are terrible ways to start the day. (The worst!) This day gets better as it wears on.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Be patient with parents, bosses and authority figures, especially this morning. You're tempted to lose your cool. Remember: You don't like disharmony.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Fights with siblings, neighbors and relatives could erupt this morning. Just be patient. These people are going to be in your life again tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

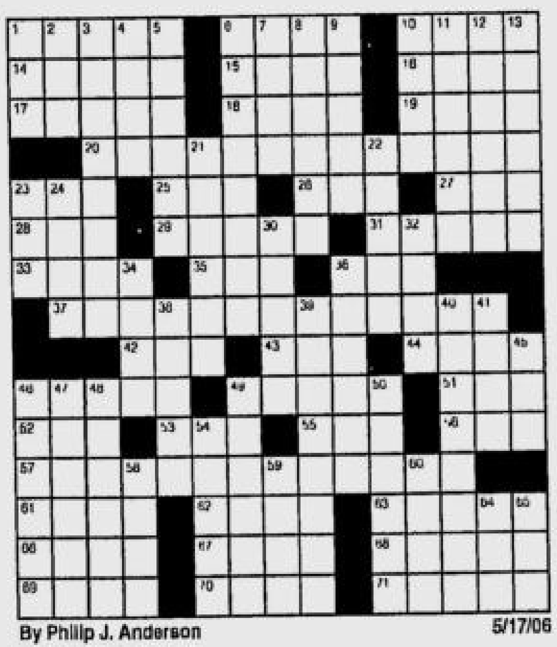
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You might be upset about finances or your personal possessions this morning. Don't take it out on anybody else.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You'll feel highly emotional about something that happens this morning. Don't get your belly in a rash. By the end of the day, you feel completely different.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Something is bothering you. It's brewing on the back burners of your mind. Try not to give it too much thought. By this evening, you feel much, much better.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You might feel upset with a friend or a member of a group today, especially this morning. It's more important to keep friends. Be patient until you have calmed down later today.

DAILY CROSSWORD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42 43 44 45
46 47 48 49 50 51
52 53 54 55 56
57 58 59 60
61 62 63 64 65
66 67 68
69 70 71

By Philip J. Anderson
Portland, OR
5/17/06

ACROSS
1 Office subs
6 Dance, film, etc.
10 Red planet
14 Walled city near Madrid
15 Half an island?
16 Arabian gulf
17 Broom made of twigs
18 "Nana" star Anna
19 Scruff
20 Melville's novel with personality?
23 Spring mo.
25 __ Arbor, MI
26 R.E. Lee's nat.
27 Small boy
28 __ Lanka
29 Of course, in slang
31 Ship's poles
33 Fly high
35 "O sole __"
36 Knight's title
37 Texas town with a fall-back position?
42 Feb. follower
43 So-so grade
44 Tribal tales
46 Applauds
49 Sing monotonously
51 Harden
52 Tic-tac-toe win
53 __-la-la
55 HST's successor
56 Flock female
57 English novelist with a strong consonant?
61 Informed about
62 Central part
63 Wear away
66 Actual
67 Director Kazan
68 Ophelia and Hamlet
69 Family chart
70 Engrossed
71 Portents

DOWN
1 Bar bill
2 Holiday lead-in
3 Invalid judicial process
4 Ruse
5 Far Eastern boat
6 Vote in __ (use a proxy)
7 British work schedule
8 Deep furrow
9 Sahara grains
10 Plenty of
11 Changes with the times
12 Say again
13 Sammy and J.C.
21 Captivate
22 Sri Lankan people
23 Ninny
24 Stage device
30 Spiral seashell
32 Asian sea
34 Freeway access
36 __ Buck (1985 Kentucky Derby winner)
38 Yucky
39 Tie
40 Rocket top
41 Make ale
45 Summer in Tours
46 Accomplice
47 Repair-shop car
48 Major arteries
49 Rapeseed oil
50 Shipworm
54 Indy entrant
58 Pineapple brand
59 Faucet problem
60 1/16 ounce
64 Bear's lair
65 Part of CBS?

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

S	E	P	T	E	T	■	P	U	R	R	■	L	I	V
O	T	T	E	R	S	■	A	G	E	E	■	O	N	E
B	O	B	C	R	A	T	C	H	I	T	■	V	C	R
B	I	O	■	S	R	I	■	■	G	A	M	E	L	Y
E	L	A	N	■	■	S	P	O	N	G	E	B	O	B
R	E	T	U	R	N	■	I	D	S	■	D	I	V	A
■	■	■	M	U	T	A	T	E	■	■	■	T	E	D
■	B	O	B	T	H	E	B	U	I	L	D	E	R	■
E	L	D	■	■	■	R	O	M	P	E	R	■	■	■
M	O	D	L	■	B	I	S	■	O	D	E	S	S	A
B	O	B	G	R	I	E	S	L	■	■	G	L	O	B
A	D	A	G	E	S	■	■	E	T	S	■	I	R	A
S	I	L	■	S	Q	U	A	R	E	P	A	N	T	S
S	E	L	■	T	U	T	U	■	M	A	G	G	I	E
Y	R	S	■	S	E	E	K	■	P	R	O	S	E	D

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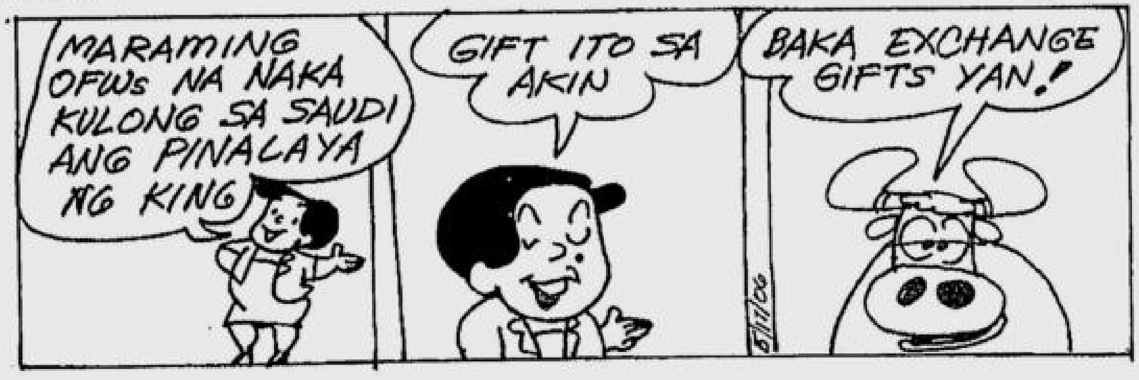
5/17/06

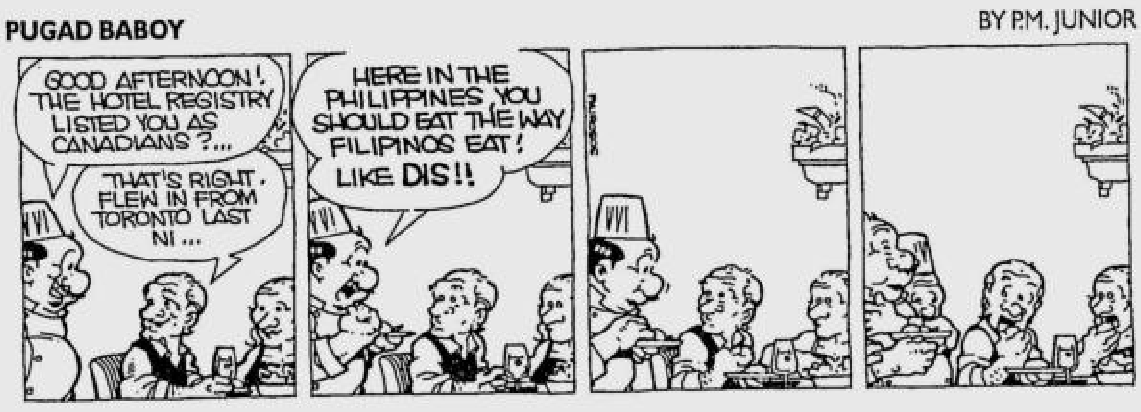
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


MARAMING OFWs NA NAKA KULONG SA SAUDI ANG PINALAYA NG KING
GIFT ITO SA AKIN
BAKA EXCHANGE GIFTS YAN!
5/17/06

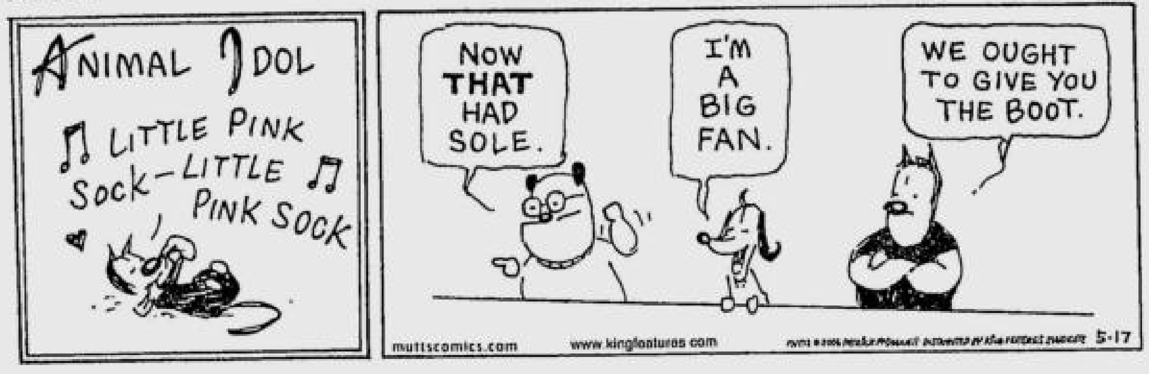
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


GOOD AFTERNOON! THE HOTEL REGISTRY LISTED YOU AS CANADIANS?...
THAT'S RIGHT. FLEW IN FROM TORONTO LAST NI...
HERE IN THE PHILIPPINES YOU SHOULD EAT THE WAY FILIPINOS EAT! LIKE DIS!!

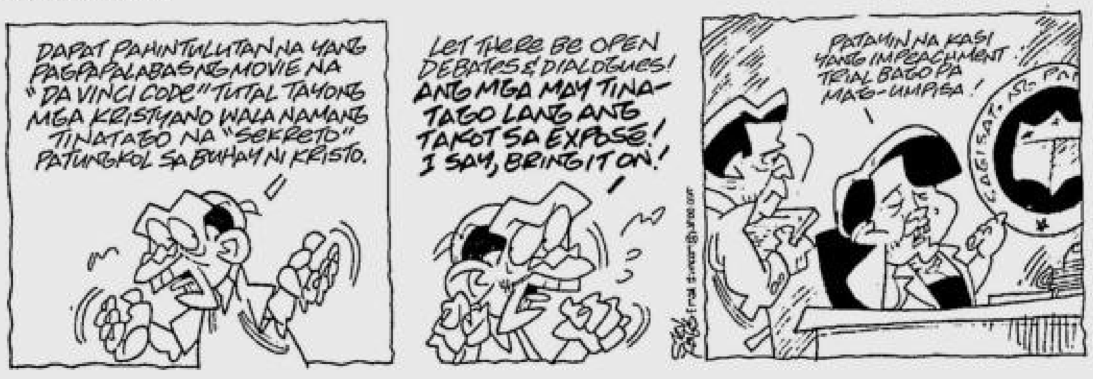
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


ANIMAL IDOL
LITTLE PINK SOCK - LITTLE PINK SOCK
NOW THAT HAD SOLE.
I'M A BIG FAN.
WE OUGHT TO GIVE YOU THE BOOT.
muttscomics.com
www.kingfeatures.com
5-17

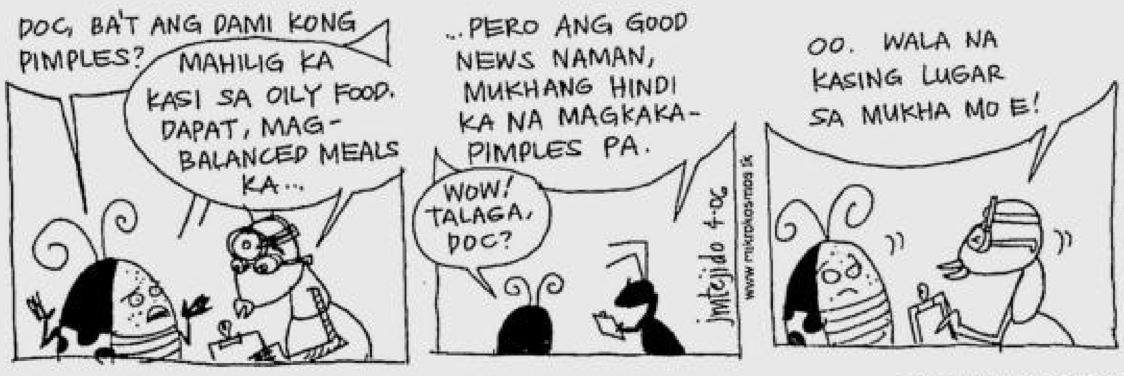
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


DAPAT PAHINTULUTAN NA YANG PAGPAPALABAS NG MOVIE NA "DA VINCI CODE" TUTAL TAYONG MGA KRISTYANO WALA NAMANG TINATAGO NA "SEKRETO" PATUNGKOL SA BUHAY NI KRISTO.
LET THERE BE OPEN DEBATES & DIALOGUES! ANG MGA MAY TINATAGO LANG ANG TAKOT SA EXPOSE! I SAY, BRING IT ON!
PATAMIN NA KASI YANG IMPEACHMENT TRIAL BAGO PA MAG-UMPISA!

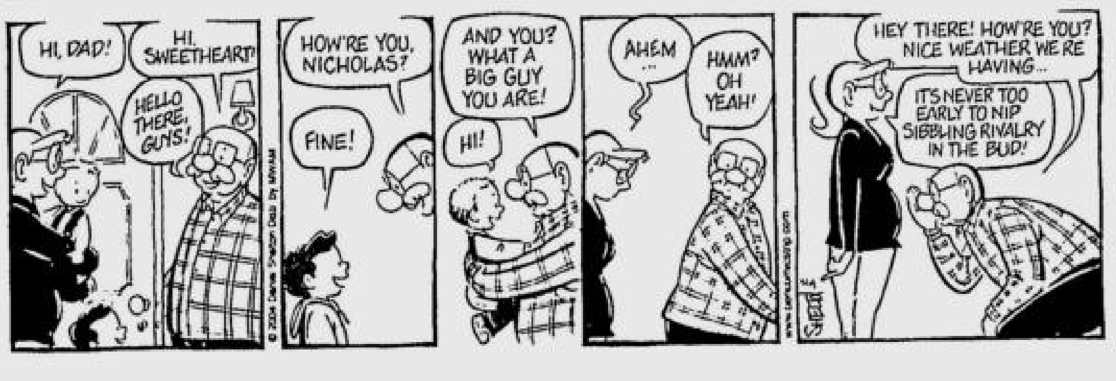
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


DOC, BA'T ANG DAMI KONG PIMPLES?
MAHILIG KA KASI SA OILY FOOD. DAPAT, MAG-BALANCED MEALS KA...
...PERO ANG GOOD NEWS NAMAN, MUKHANG HINDI KA NA MAGKAKA-PIMPLES PA.
WOW! TALAGA, DOC?
OO. WALA NA KASING LUGAR SA MUKHA MO E!
jmtejido 4-06
www.mikrokosmos.tk

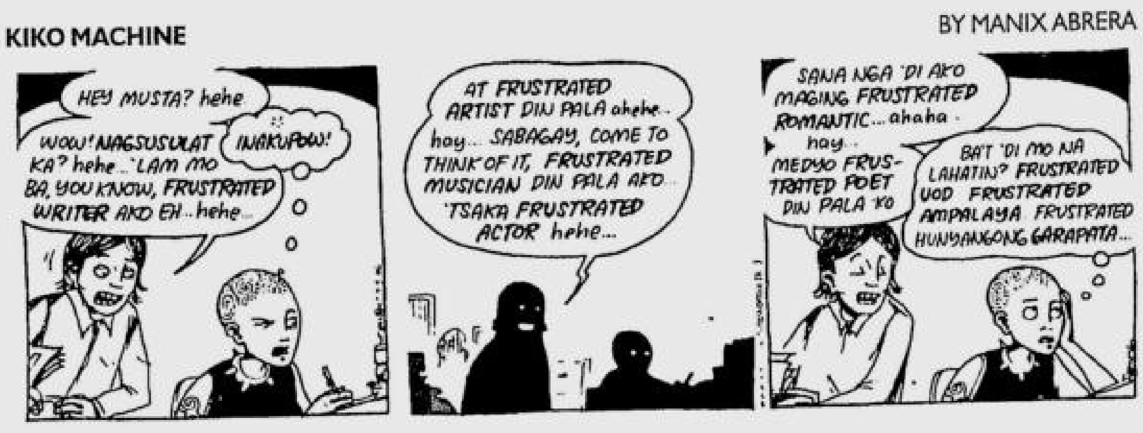
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


HI, DAD!
HI, SWEETHEART!
HELLO THERE, GUYS!
HOW'RE YOU, NICHOLAS?
FINE!
AND YOU? WHAT A BIG GUY YOU ARE!
HI!
AHEM ...
HMM? OH YEAH!
HEY THERE! HOW'RE YOU? NICE WEATHER WE'RE HAVING...
ITS NEVER TOO EARLY TO NIP SIBBLING RIVALRY IN THE BUD!

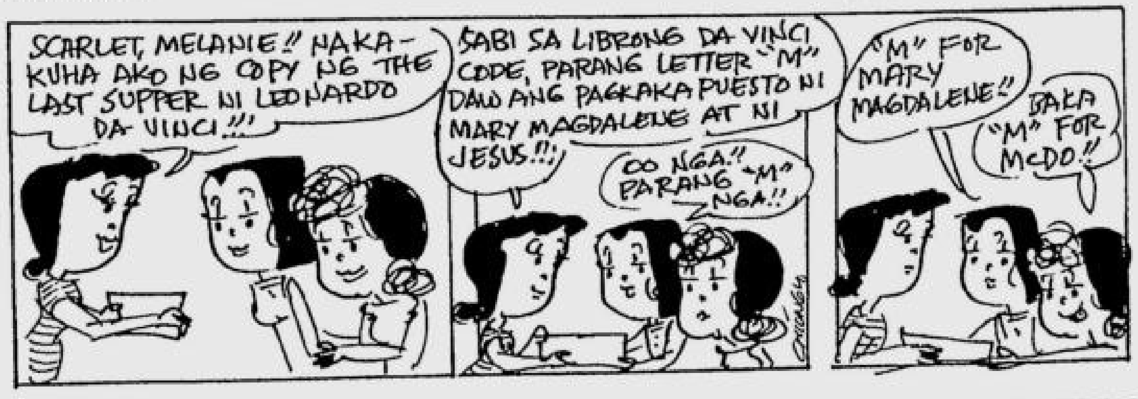
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


HEY MUSTA? hehe
WOW! NAGSUSULAT KA? hehe... 'LAM MO BA, YOU KNOW, FRUSTRATED WRITER AKO EH.. hehe...
INAKUPOW!
AT FRUSTRATED ARTIST DIN PALA ahehe.. hay... SABAGAY, COME TO THINK OF IT, FRUSTRATED MUSICIAN DIN PALA AKO... 'TSAKA FRUSTRATED ACTOR hehe...
SANA NGA 'DI AKO MAGING FRUSTRATED ROMANTIC... ahaha. hay... MEDYO FRUSTRATED POET DIN PALA 'KO
BAT 'DI MO NA LAHATIN? FRUSTRATED UOD FRUSTRATED AMPALAYA FRUSTRATED HUNYANGONG GARAPATA...

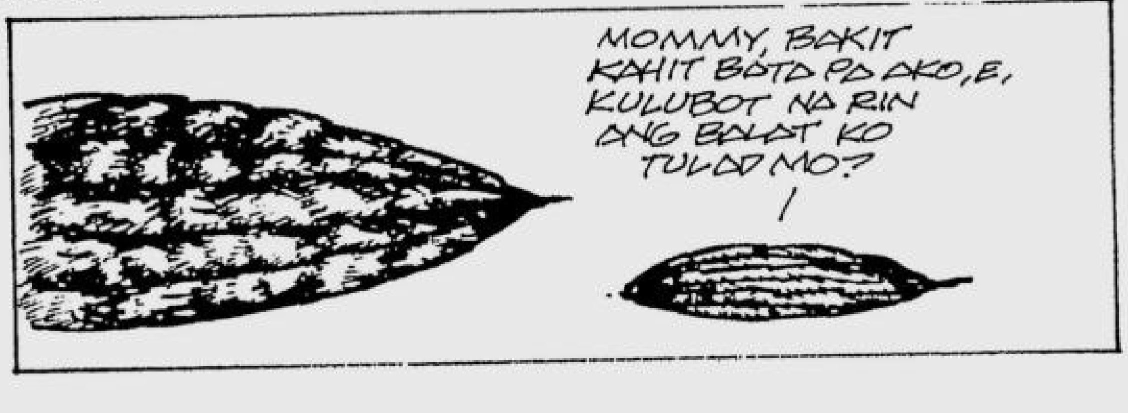
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


SCARLET, MELANIE!! NAKAKUHA AKO NG COPY NG THE LAST SUPPER NI LEONARDO DA VINCI!!!
SABI SA LIBRONG DA VINCI CODE, PARANG LETTER "M" DAW ANG PAGKAKA PUESTO NI MARY MAGDALENE AT NI JESUS!!!
OO NGA!! PARANG "M" NGA!!
"M" FOR MARY MAGDALENE!!
BAKA "M" FOR MCDO!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


MOMMY, BAKIT KAHIT BOTO PO AKO, E, KULUBOT NA RIN ANG BALAT KO TULAD MO?

ENTERTAINMENT

Too plucky for comfort

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

IN 1972, "THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE" helped launch the "disaster wave" in the movies. In 1997, the similarly waterlogged "Titanic" became the most profitable film ever made. A few years ago, "The Perfect Storm" also did well. And now, in 2006, "Poseidon" makes its bid for supremacy at the box office. What are the "wet and wild" film's prospects?

On point of visual chills and thrills, the remake of "The Poseidon Adventure" more than passes muster. The performances of its lead players are also appropriately intense and committed. But the movie falters in the areas of plot, believability and empathy.

The story in capsule form: A New Year's Eve party is in full swing in a luxury liner's huge ballroom—but the revelry abruptly and tragically ends when a towering "rogue wave" slams into the 20-story vessel and rolls it completely upside-down.

A few hundred survivors decide to await rescue in the hermetically-sealed ballroom, but a handful of brave souls opt to look for an escape route. They are divided for their "rash" decision, but it's spot-on, because the ballroom soon turns out to be not as impregnable as expected.

Led by a professional gambler (played by **Josh Lucas**), the "escapees" claw their way up the ship's bowels, hoping to crawl to safety through the vessel's propeller maintenance shafts.

Challenges and life-threatening events continually test their resolve, but with God's grace, incredible luck and a very obliging team of scriptwriters, they do get rescued at the film's final fade.

The fact that everything happens inside the ship limits the production's eventful progression.

It's also impossibly fortuitous that the survivors manage to find their way through the ship's circuitous maze of dead ends and wreckage-strewn passageways.

After the nth "lucky" break, the viewer ceases to suspend his disbelief, from sheer overload of cockeyed optimism and blatant coincidence.

The visually exciting movie devotes so much of its running time to its many dangers and facile solutions that it doesn't limn its characters well

TOO PLUCKY/ A2-4

WITH Maverick and Ariel, humor rules!

RUSHES

Binay, Biazon & Bayani

"TOTOO TV" HOSTS ARIEL and Maverick name their wackiest interviewees thus far: Binay, Biazon and Bayani.

They asked Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay if he ever had his sun-kissed skin bleached. Answer: "I should try that." They asked Sen. Rodolfo Biazon if he shampooed his hair. Answer: "Not anymore." Did he ever have *kuto*? Answer: *"Hindi naman."*

They asked MMDA chair Bayani Fernando if he ever made *boso* when he was younger. Answer: *"A, oo. Umakyat pa ako sa puno."*

MELANIE Marquez

Like minds

Are you wondering what makes newlyweds Snooky and Niño Mendoza tick?

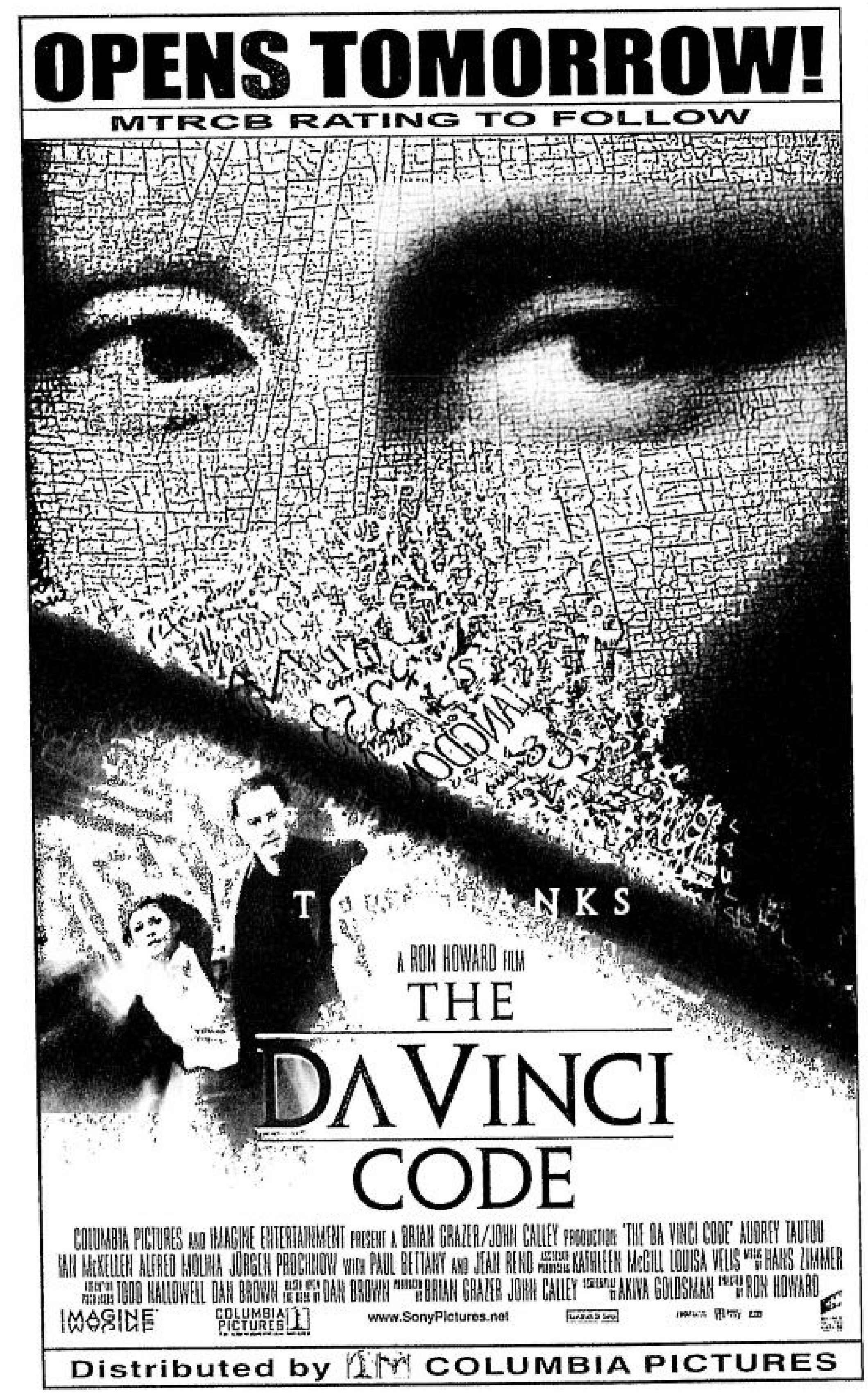
Just watch the greenhorn groom's next interview and see for yourself that they are on the same wavelength. Tuned in. Like minds.

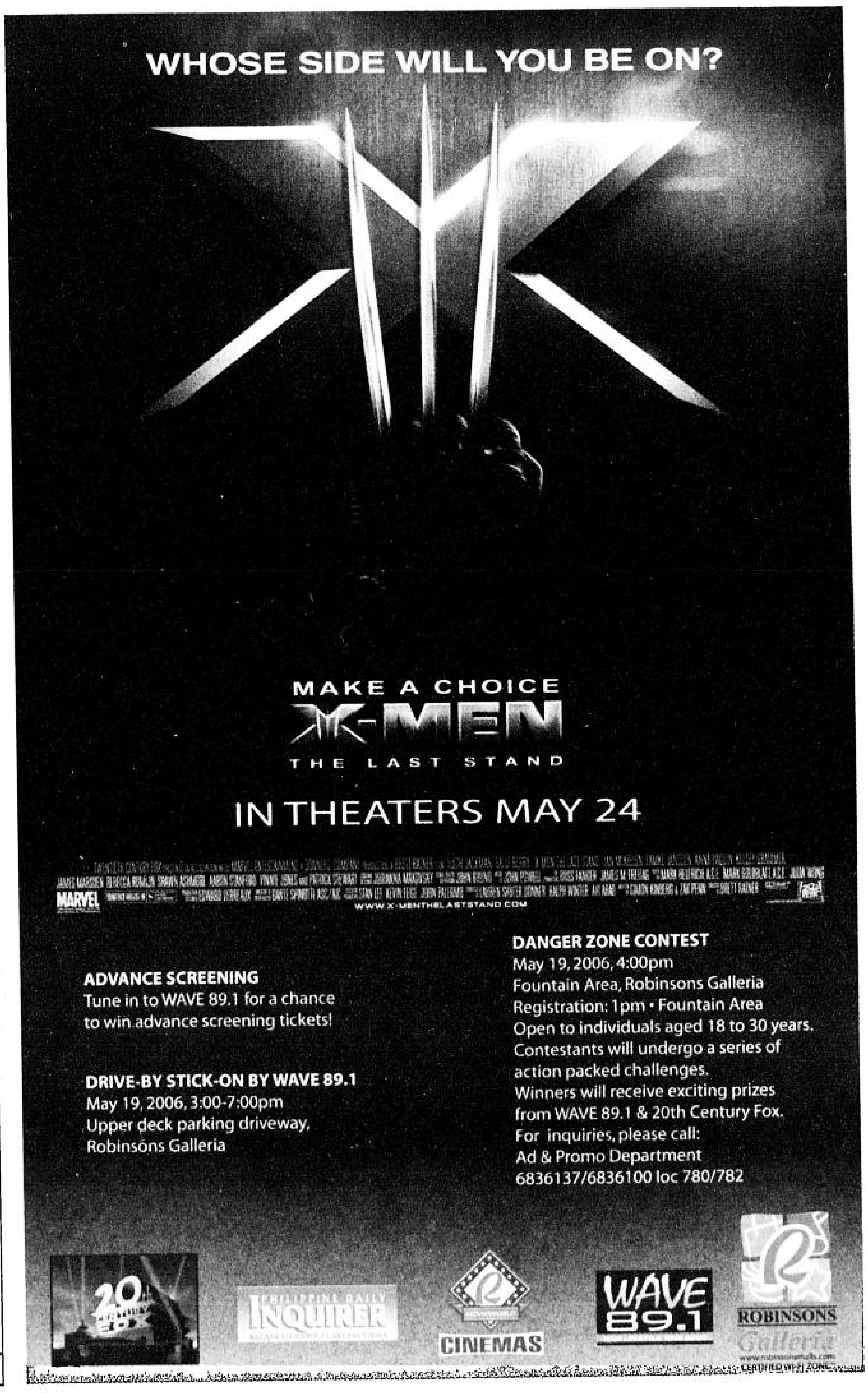
Wedding belle

Ai-Ai de las Alas has con-

BINAY/ A2-2

TOM CRUISE
M:i:III
THE MISSION BEGINS
MAY 3
on its 3RD WEEK!!!
MissionImpossible.com
A RELEASE THROUGH
at all Robinsons Movieworld Cinemas
CINEMA ACCESS: 635-5555
MTRCB Rating: PG-13
www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

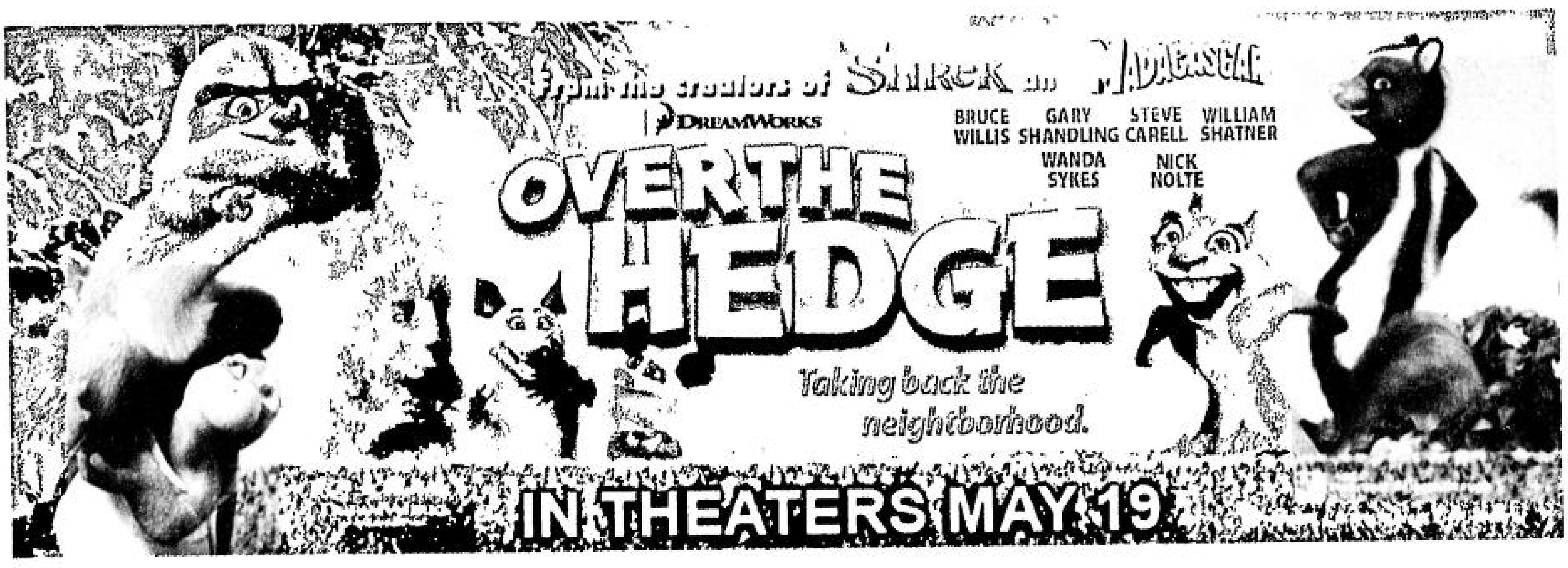

OPENS TOMORROW!
MTRCB RATING TO FOLLOW
T NKS
A RON HOWARD FILM
THE DA VINCI CODE
COLUMBIA PICTURES AND IMAGINE ENTERTAINMENT PRESENT A BRIAN GRAZER/JOHN CALLEY PRODUCTION 'THE DA VINCI CODE' AUDREY TAUTOU IAN McKELLEN ALFRED MOLINA JÜRGEN PROCHNOW WITH PAUL BETTANY AND JEAN RENO KATHLEEN McGILL LOUISA VELIS HANS ZIMMER TODD HALLOWELL DAN BROWN DAN BROWN BRIAN GRAZER JOHN CALLEY AKIVA GOLDSMAN RON HOWARD
IMAGINE
COLUMBIA PICTURES
www.SonyPictures.net
Distributed by COLUMBIA PICTURES

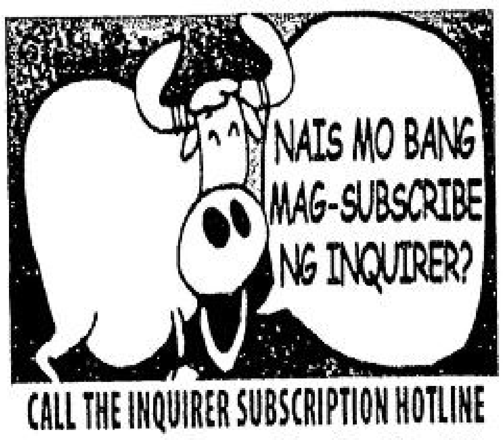

WHOSE SIDE WILL YOU BE ON?
MAKE A CHOICE
X-MEN
THE LAST STAND
IN THEATERS MAY 24
MARVEL
WWW.X-MENTHELASTSTAND.COM
20th Century Fox
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
CINEMAS
WAVE 89.1
ROBINSONS Galleria

ADVANCE SCREENING
Tune in to WAVE 89.1 for a chance to win advance screening tickets!

DRIVE-BY STICK-ON BY WAVE 89.1
May 19, 2006, 3:00-7:00pm
Upper deck parking driveway,
Robinsons Galleria

DANGER ZONE CONTEST
May 19, 2006, 4:00pm
Fountain Area, Robinsons Galleria
Registration: 1pm • Fountain Area
Open to individuals aged 18 to 30 years.
Contestants will undergo a series of action packed challenges.
Winners will receive exciting prizes from WAVE 89.1 & 20th Century Fox.
For inquiries, please call:
Ad & Promo Department
6836137/6836100 loc 780/782


From the creators of SHREK and MADAGASCAR
DREAMWORKS
BRUCE WILLIS
GARY SHANDLING
STEVE CARELL
WILLIAM SHATNER
WANDA SYKES
NICK NOLTE
OVER THE HEDGE
Taking back the neighborhood.
IN THEATERS MAY 19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You're in good hands with METROBANK
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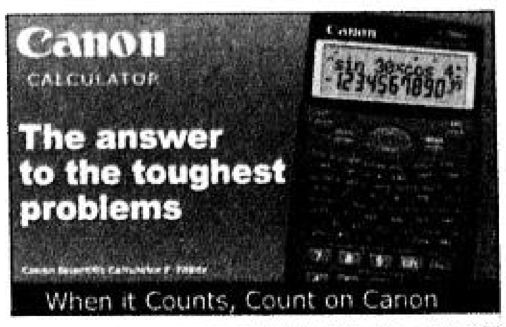


Canon CALCULATOR
The answer to the toughest problems
When it Counts, Count on Canon

Japan firm plans ₱5-B coco facility in RP

600,000 hectares to be needed for coconut plantation

By Christine A. Gaylican

TOYO ENGINEERING CORP. (TEC) OF JAPAN IS PLANNING TO put up an integrated facility in northern Luzon to produce the biofuel coconut methyl esther, the head of the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) said yesterday.

The project is estimated to require close to P5 billion in investments.

Officials of Toyo Engineering were looking at planting new coconut trees on some 600,000 hectares, with the yields to be transformed to coconut methyl esther for export to Japan, said newly installed PCA Administrator Oscar G. Garin.

Japan now widely uses methyl esther as fuel or fuel additive.

"They (Toyo Engineering Corp.) have consulted the agency as to how they could develop the project, which could give our replanting program a boost," Garin said. "Toyo Engineering currently has a temporary facility and conducts

JAPAN/ B5

WHAT'S INSIDE
Gov't debt stood at P3.96T in end-Feb /B3
Gov't to borrow P104.5B in Q3 /B8

Smart seeks tax perks for 3G project

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST CELLULAR PHONE firm would spend as much as P14.6 billion for its third-generation wireless network—almost thrice that of its closest rival—over the next three years, company officials said.

Speaking to reporters on Tuesday, Smart Communications Inc. chief financial officer Anabelle L. Chua said the amount was an "aggressive" estimate that the company would present before the Board of Investments in applying for a tax holiday package.

Despite its bigger investment, however, Smart was beaten to the punch by Globe, which was granted a P2.5-billion tax incentive earlier this month for its pioneering efforts in setting up a 3G network in the country.

Globe had pegged its investment in the new technology at P5.48 billion.

Chua said that Smart's investment in 3G might rise to as much as P32 billion over the next six years, depending on how the service is received by the market.

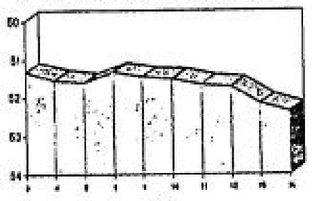
"This will be funded with internally generated funds," she said, although a "small portion" of about 30 percent may come in the form of debt.

To date, about 250,000 subscribers are us-

SMART/ B4

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



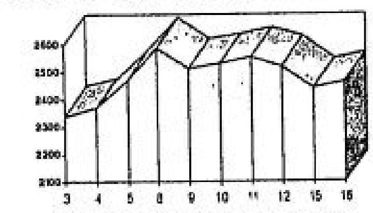
PESO-DOLLAR RATE

₱ 52.37 = $1
As of 5 p.m., May 16, 2006

¥ 110.22 = $1
As of 5 p.m., May 16, 2006

GOLD: **$722.10-722.60**
per ounce Hong Kong, May 12, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Shares close 0.88% higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.88-PERCENT higher yesterday after investors picked up bargains following two consecutive sessions of heavy losses, dealers said.

They also said investors in general appeared to be satisfied with the strong profit results of most blue chips for the three months to March, and were optimistic that the trend would continue for the rest of the year.

The composite index added 21.46 points to 2,460.19 after trading between 2,415.73 and 2,466.24. The broader all-shares index gained 7.52 points to 1,527.46.

Losers outnumbered gainers 60 to 46, while 47 stocks were unchanged. Volume reached 2.68 billion shares worth P2.07 billion.

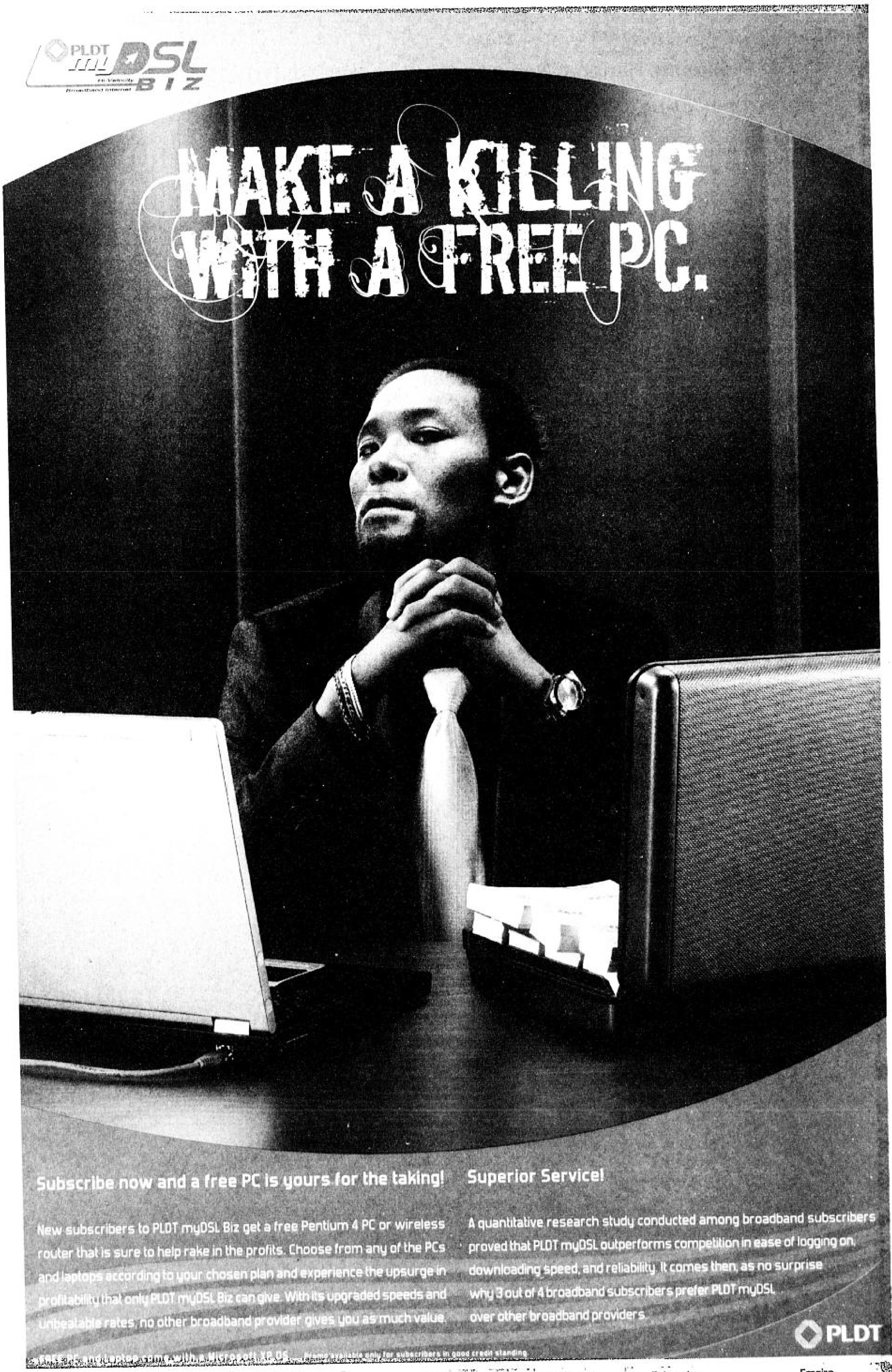
"Bargain-hunting has emerged after the steep correction," said Astro del Castillo of First Grade Holdings.

The main index had shed 4.4 percent over its two-day decline.

"After recent sharp swings, the market may go into consolidation and let the bulls rest," Del Castillo added.

Gains in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. boosted the market's rise. It ended up P40 to P2,110. Rival Globe Telecom gained P25 to P995. Top-traded Ayala Corp. ended P2.50 lower at P420.

San Miguel-A was unchanged at P64, while its "B" shares were down 50 centavos to P82. *AFP*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MAKE A KILLING WITH A FREE PC.

Subscribe now and a free PC is yours for the taking!

New subscribers to PLDT myDSL Biz get a free Pentium 4 PC or wireless router that is sure to help rake in the profits. Choose from any of the PCs and laptops according to your chosen plan and experience the upsurge in profitability that only PLDT myDSL Biz can give. With its upgraded speeds and unbeatable rates, no other broadband provider gives you as much value.

Superior Service!

A quantitative research study conducted among broadband subscribers proved that PLDT myDSL outperforms competition in ease of logging on, downloading speed, and reliability. It comes then, as no surprise why 3 out of 4 broadband subscribers prefer PLDT myDSL over other broadband providers.

PLDT

FREE PC and laptop come with a Microsoft XP OS. Promo available only for subscribers in good credit standing.

Only 1,000 PCs available! Hurry while supplies last!

Package	Explorer	Entrepreneur	Enterprise	Empire
Upgraded Speed (up to)	1.6 Mbps	2.0 Mbps	2.5 Mbps	2.7 Mbps
Monthly Fees (VAT exclusive)	₱3,000	₱4,000	₱8,000	₱14,500
Free Products	Wireless router	One (1) PC	Two (2) PCs	One (1) PC and one (1) laptop

[illegible]
genuine Microsoft

JG Summit profit up 417% to ₱3.88B

Sale of URC shares boosted revenues

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

GOKONGWEI-LED JG SUMMIT Holdings Inc. said yesterday its net income surged 417 percent in the first quarter to P3.88 billion from the previous year's P750.4 million, boosted by the sale of shares in branded foods unit Universal Robina Corp.

Last February, URC completed a primary and secondary offering of its common shares to international and local investors.

URC's major shareholders—JG Summit Holdings Inc., Express Holdings Inc. and Robinsons Supermarket Corp.—raised some P7 billion from the sale of their shares in the branded foods company.

In a financial report filed with the Philippine Stock Exchange, JG Summit said that without the one-time gain, net income would still have grown 17.7 percent to P674.8 million from P573.2 million.

Consolidated revenues were higher by 45.9 percent at P23.54 billion from P16.13 billion last year, boosted by the company's core businesses such as foods and real estate development, as well as revenues from petrochemicals.

Interest income from various investment portfolios also boosted the company's revenues, reflecting a 74.8-percent growth to P1.59 billion.

Not all business units, however, registered a rosy picture as service revenues from the company's telecommunications unit dropped by 6 percent. Revenues from the textile business also decreased by 25 percent.

Gross profit for the first quarter hit P5.5 billion, higher by 13 percent. But rising costs of services in the air transportation and mobile phone businesses limited the growth of gross margins. Operating expenses swelled 24.5 percent to P4.97 billion from P3.99 billion.

Costs related to operating the mobile phone business and air transportation, as well as the expansion of the firm's foods business in Asia, all contributed to the growth in costs.

Financing costs and other charges incurred in the first quarter was up 37.3 percent to P2.25 billion this year. The increase in the level of the company's financial debt contributed to higher finance costs.

URC posted consolidated net sales of P9.2 billion for the three months ended Dec. 31, 2005, a 21.7-percent increase over the same period of last year. This was driven by the growth in branded consumer foods.

Robinsons Land Corp. recorded gross revenues of P1.72 billion for the first quarter of its fiscal year 2006, up by 38 percent from last year's P1.25 billion. Net income for the three months ended Dec. 31 stood at P419 million, up by 28 percent from last year's P328.0 million.

Philippine National Bank

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of Stockholders of the Philippine National Bank will be held on May 30, 2006 at 8:00 a.m. at the Ballroom, Upper Lobby, Century Park Hotel, 599 Pablo Ocampo Sr. St., Malate, Manila.

The Agenda for the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Secretary's Proof of Notice and Quorum
3. Approval of the Minutes of the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting held on May 24, 2005
4. Report of the President on the Results of Operations for the Year 2005
5. Approval of the 2005 Annual Report
6. Approval of the Amendment to the Amended By-Laws (transfer of the position, powers and duties of the Chairman of the Board in Sections 6.1 and 6.3, Article VI captioned "Officers" to Section 5.4, Article V captioned "Board of Directors")
7. Ratification of All Acts, Resolutions and Proceedings of the Board of Directors and Corporate Officers since the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting
8. Election of Directors
9. Appointment of External Auditor
10. Other Matters
11. Adjournment

Minutes of the 2005 Annual Stockholders' Meeting as well as resolutions of the Board of Directors from May 25, 2005 will be available for examination during office hours at the Office of the Corporate Secretary.

Only stockholders of record as of May 2, 2006 will be entitled to notice and vote at this meeting. Registration will begin at 6:00 a.m.

If you cannot personally attend the meeting, you may designate your authorized representative by submitting a PROXY to the Office of the Corporate Secretary not later than 5:00 p.m. on May 25, 2006. Any proxies so received will be validated on May 26, 2006, 9:30 a.m., at the Office of the Stock Transfer Agent at Allied Bank Center, 6754 Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

Pasay City, March 24, 2006

RENATO J. FERNANDEZ
Corporate Secretary

Digitel posts ₱42-M profit in 1st quarter

By Daxim L. Lucas

GOKONGWEI-CONTROLLED DIGITEL Telecommunications Phils. Inc. reversed its fortunes in the first quarter of 2006, managing to eke out a profit of P43.2 million compared with a net loss of P451.2 million in the same period last year.

In a disclosure to corporate regulators, Digitel said its bottom line was boosted by an increase in the number of subscribers for the "24/7" service of its Sun Cellular brand.

"Digitel expects to further improve results of operation as it continues to expand the wireless network, introduce new and innovative products, and implement cost-containment measures to further reduce its costs and expenses," the company added in its report to the Securities and Exchange Commission.

In the first quarter, Digitel registered a 30.7-percent increase in its consolidated revenues to P3.12 billion from P2.38 billion a year ago.

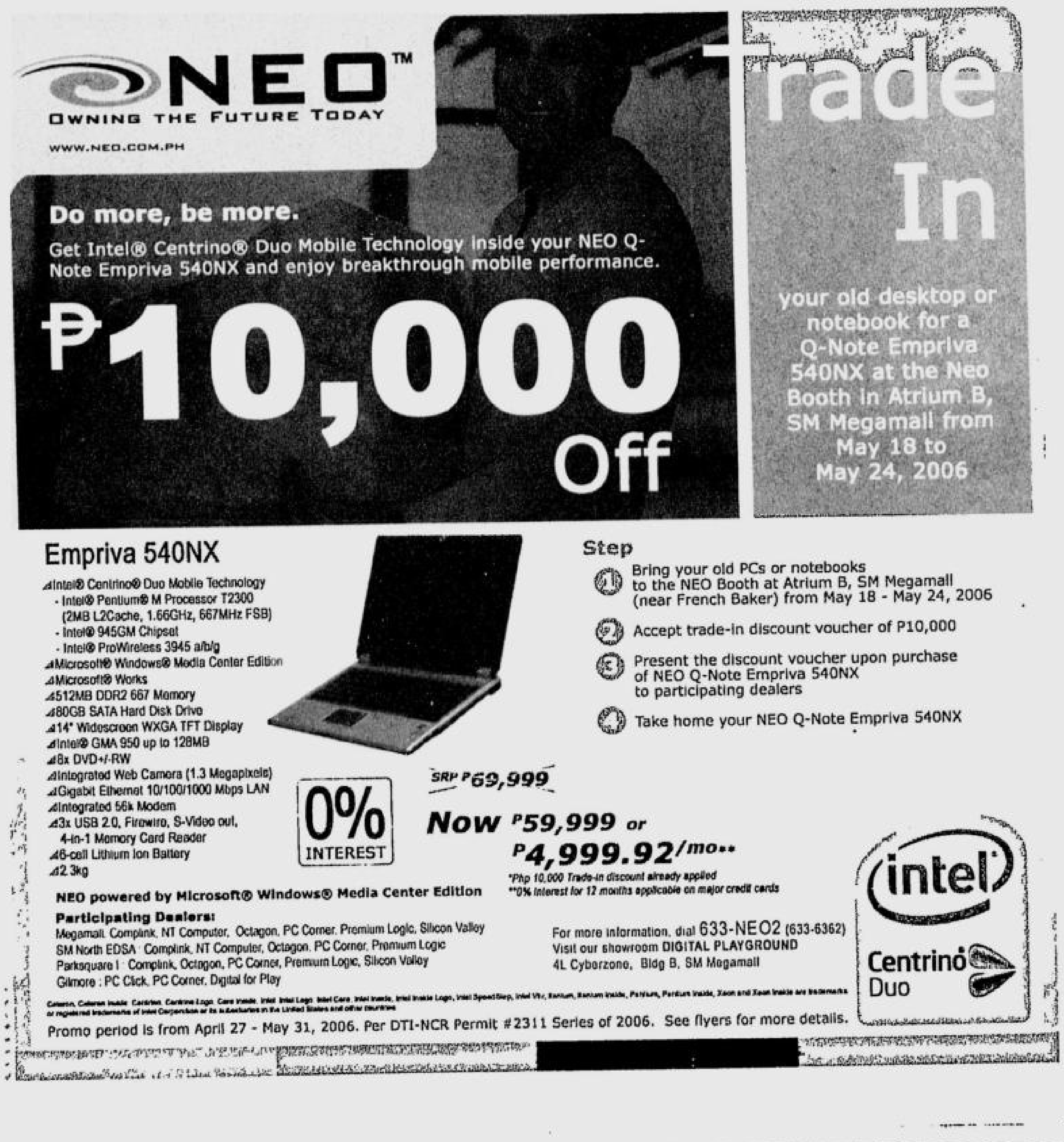
Among the business segments, the wireless communication services posted an increase of P20.1 million to P750.2 million from P730 million last year, it said.

Its wireline data communication services posted an increase of P4.5 million or 7 percent to P72.1 million from P67.7 million.

"The increase in these business segments was brought about by the increase in the subscriber base arising from the successful launch of 24/7 unlimited product variants and the competitive rates of the wireline data communication services," Digitel said.

The company has slightly more than two million subscribers for its Sun Cellular service, which lags a poor third behind industry giants Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., with its Smart and Piltel brands, and Globe Telecom Inc.

"However, the increases were tempered by lower wireline voice communication service and wireless non-service revenue," the company said.



Get Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology inside your NEO Q-Note Empriva 540NX and enjoy breakthrough mobile performance.

Trade In your old desktop or notebook for a Q-Note Empriva 540NX at the Neo Booth in Atrium B, SM Megamall from May 18 to May 24, 2006

Empriva 540NX
- Intel® Centrino® Duo Mobile Technology
  - Intel® Pentium® M Processor T2300 (2MB L2Cache, 1.66GHz, 667MHz FSB)
  - Intel® 945GM Chipset
  - Intel® ProWireless 3945 a/b/g
- Microsoft® Windows® Media Center Edition
- Microsoft® Works
- 512MB DDR2 667 Memory
- 80GB SATA Hard Disk Drive
- 14" Widescreen WXGA TFT Display
- Intel® GMA 950 up to 128MB
- 8x DVD+/-RW
- Integrated Web Camera (1.3 Megapixels)
- Gigabit Ethernet 10/100/1000 Mbps LAN
- Integrated 56k Modem
- 3x USB 2.0, Firewire, S-Video out, 4-in-1 Memory Card Reader
- 6-cell Lithium Ion Battery
- 2.3kg

Step
1. Bring your old PCs or notebooks to the NEO Booth at Atrium B, SM Megamall (near French Baker) from May 18 - May 24, 2006
2. Accept trade-in discount voucher of P10,000
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4. Take home your NEO Q-Note Empriva 540NX

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Promo period is from April 27 - May 31, 2006. Per DTI-NCR Permit #2311 Series of 2006. See flyers for more details.

[redacted]

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of May 16, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	6.7	7	6.7	6.8	175,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	36	37.5	36	37.5	272,700
Bank of the Phil. Islands	65	67.5	65	66.5	2,177,700
China Banking Corp.	900	900	895	895	1,560
Citystate Savings Bank	20.25	20.25	20.25	20.25	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.44	0.45	0.44	0.44	2,460,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	70.5	71	70.5	71	258,700
International Exch. Bank	39.5	39.5	39.5	39.5	65,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	39.5	40	39.5	40	935,900
Philippine National Bank	36	36	35	35	13,100
Phil. Savings Bank	39.5	39.5	39.5	39.5	10,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	17.5	18.5	17.5	18.5	44,900
Security Bank Corp.	55.5	55.5	55.5	55.5	75,000
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	31	31.5	31	31.5	12,200
Manulife Financial Corp.	3335	3335	3330	3330	30
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1	1	1	1	300,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	215	215	215	215	8,200
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2100	2100	2100	2100	770
Ivantage Corp.	1.2	1.28	1.18	1.22	4,749,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	49	49.5	49	49.5	309,900
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	49.5	50.5	49.5	50	1,178,400
Manila Electric Co. A	14	14.25	14	14.25	39,900
Manila Electric Co. B	21.25	21.5	21.25	21.5	1,410,900
Manila Water Co. Inc.	7.3	7.4	7.3	7.4	2,069,000
Petron Corp.	4.65	4.75	4.6	4.7	5,450,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.08	1.08	1.06	1.06	450,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	51,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	3	3	3	3	20,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	24.25	24.25	23.25	23.75	43,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35	37	35	37	227,300
Pancake House Inc.	4	4	4	4	50,000
RFM Corp.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	120,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	3.15	3.3	3.15	3.25	1,890,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.2	0.22	0.2	0.22	210,000
San Miguel Corp. A	62.5	64	62.5	64	154,400
San Miguel Corp. B	81.5	82	81.5	82	199,500
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3,000
Universal Robina Corp.	22.5	22.5	22.5	22.5	3,512,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	700,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.34	0.36	0.33	0.36	140,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.76	1.76	1.7	1.7	1,966,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1.8	2	1.8	2	560,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	5	5.1	5	5.1	984,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	2.55	2.55	2.55	2.55	1,000
Republic Cement Corp.	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.9	120,000
CHEMICALS					
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	2.85	2.85	2.85	2.85	30,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	200,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.115	0.12	3,950,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	310,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	8	8	8	8	1,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.008	0.008	0.008	0.008	16,000,000
Ayala Corp.	412.5	427.5	412.5	420	692,740
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	6.3	6.4	6.3	6.3	512,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.025	0.025	0.025	0.025	2,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.55	3.55	360,000
APC Group Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	700,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.009	77,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	1.14	1.16	1.12	1.14	2,897,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	68,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	50,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	10	10	10	10	68,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.2	1.22	1.2	1.22	7,808,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.75	4.75	4.6	4.65	4,478,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.65	3.65	216,000
F&J Princ. E Holdings Corp.	0.9	1.04	0.9	1.04	1,100,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	35,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	7.9	8	7.9	7.9	1,273,000
Keppel Holdings	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	20,000
Medco Holdings	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	200,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	210,000
Pacifica	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	1,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	360,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	200,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	5,080,000
SM Investments Corp.	247	248	240	240	355,920
South China Resources Inc.	1.12	1.16	1.12	1.16	946,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.98	1	0.98	1	23,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	0.0625	12,200,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	650,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	14	14.5	13.75	14.25	9,962,400
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.43	0.46	0.43	0.45	520,000
Belle Corp.	1.28	1.32	1.28	1.3	5,576,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	240,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.31	0.31	0.31	0.31	1,660,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	2.32	2.38	2.32	2.36	2,658,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.84	1.84	1.8	1.8	33,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.205	0.21	0.205	0.21	2,510,000
Elb Realty Developers Inc.	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	10,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.67	0.67	0.66	0.67	10,490,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	30,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.032	0.033	0.031	0.033	22,200,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.66	0.66	0.65	0.65	250,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.58	1.68	1.58	1.66	10,809,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	400,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.085	0.1	0.085	0.1	600,000
Interport Res.	0.0085	0.0095	0.0085	0.009	50,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	0.73	0.73	0.73	0.73	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	10,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.57	0.57	0.57	0.57	820,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. A	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	3,000,000
Marsteel Cons. Inc. B	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	3,000,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.66	1.78	1.66	1.76	48,430,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.26	0.27	0.25	0.26	8,390,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.25	0.25	1,530,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	240,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	12.25	12.25	11.75	11.75	380,300
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.3	0.31	0.3	0.31	3,900,000
SM Development Corp.	1.76	1.76	1.76	1.76	88,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	8.2	8.4	8.1	8.3	6,343,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.105	0.11	8,950,000
SERVICE					
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	16.25	16.5	16.25	16.5	126,600
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	266,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.26	1.3	1.26	1.3	2,773,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	970	1000	970	995	40,430
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.7	3.85	3.6	3.8	16,884,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2065	2110	2060	2110	104,220
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Ionics Inc.	1.5	1.84	1.5	1.84	870,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05	100,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.26	1.34	1.2	1.34	519,000
Philweb Corp.	0.027	0.029	0.026	0.029	456,300,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	3	3	3	3	80,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	13.75	14	13.75	13.75	701,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.3	1.36	1.3	1.34	37,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.62	1.64	1.6	1.62	696,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.59	0.61	0.59	0.61	1,260,000
EDUCATION					
Far Eastern University	1005	1005	1005	1005	200
iPeople Inc.	3.2	3.2	3.15	3.2	147,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Jardine Davies Inc.	22	22	22	22	500
Macroasia Corp.	2.55	2.65	2.5	2.5	1,965,000
Paxys Inc.	12.25	12.25	12	12	694,800
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	5.5	5.8	5.4	5.7	13,744,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	5.5	5.9	5.5	5.9	3,816,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.009	0.0095	0.009	0.0095	144,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.8	9	8.6	8.9	5,390,000
Benguet Corp. A	13.5	13.5	12.75	12.75	189,900
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.2	2.38	2.1	2.3	737,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.39	0.41	0.38	0.4	27,240,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.43	0.44	0.42	0.43	20,180,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.026	0.029	0.026	0.028	973,900,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.031	0.028	0.031	232,900,000
Omico Corp.	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	216,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	4.9	5.1	4.85	5	20,362,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	5	5.2	4.85	5	10,706,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	29.5	30	29.5	30	83,800
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.43	0.45	0.42	0.42	160,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.78	0.8	0.75	0.77	2,270,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.3	0.3	0.29	0.3	2,690,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.012	0.012	0.011	0.012	131,500,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.013	0.013	0.012	0.012	3,200,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1.62	1.62	1.5	1.56	5,245,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1.54	1.62	1.5	1.6	2,103,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	16.75	17.75	16.5	17.25	2,097,100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	17	17	17	17	1,424,200

CURRENCIES

May 16, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.782044	1.000000	52.0680
Japan	Yen	0.007074	0.009046	0.4710
United Kingdom	Pound	1.468679	1.878000	97.7837
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.100870	0.128982	6.7158
Switzerland	Franc	0.644985	0.824742	42.9427
Canada	Dollar	0.702330	0.898069	46.7607
Singapore	Dollar	0.494495	0.632311	32.9232
Australia	Dollar	0.597893	0.764526	39.8073
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.075489	2.653928	138.1847
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.208628	0.266773	13.8903
Brunei	Dollar	0.492937	0.630318	32.8194
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000110	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.020470	0.026175	1.3629
UAE	Dirham	0.212946	0.272294	14.1778
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.278700	66.5794
Argentina	Peso	0.257251	0.328947	17.1276
Brazil	Real	0.361472	0.462214	24.0666
Denmark	Kroner	0.134125	0.171506	8.9300
India	Rupee	0.017256	0.022065	1.1489
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.216633	0.277008	14.4233
Mexico	New Peso	0.070188	0.089750	4.6731
New Zealand	Dollar	0.486195	0.621697	32.3705
Norway	Kroner	0.128394	0.164177	8.5484
Pakistan	Rupee	0.013034	0.016667	0.8678
South Africa	Rand	0.122963	0.157233	8.1868
Korea	Won	0.000829	0.001060	0.0552
Sweden	Kroner	0.106228	0.135834	7.0726
Syria	Pound	0.015065	0.019264	1.0030
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024754	0.031653	1.6481

Gov't debt stood at ₱3.96T in end-Feb

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S debt stood at P3.96 trillion as of end-February, unchanged from the previous month's level, as the additional borrowings undertaken in the second month were simply offset by the declining effects of a stronger peso on foreign liabilities.

The debt figure was an accumulated amount of borrowings that the government undertook over the past years to cover expenditure requirements that could not be accommodated by its revenues. The government also borrows to pay maturing obligations.

Documents from the Bureau of the Treasury showed that of the debt, domestic loans accounted for P2.17 billion, up by a measly 0.5 percent from the previous month's figure. The Treasury said the slight increase was due to the higher volume of government securities issued in February.

Foreign borrowings, on the other hand, stood at P1.8 billion, dropping by 0.6 percent from P1.81 billion a month ago. The Treasury attributed the decline in external debts to the appreciation of the peso from January to February.

The Treasury also said foreign debt declined because the government paid more maturing external obligations than it borrowed during the month.

Domestic borrowings are mostly undertaken through the regular issuance of treasury bills and bonds. Foreign borrowings come from either the sale of sovereign bonds in the international market or official development assistance provided by multilateral and bilateral agencies.

The country's biggest sources of ODA include the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

WAREHOUSE SALE
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UP TO 40% OFF on Frigidaire REFRIGERATORS

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For more information contact:
JCORDON COMMERCIAL CORPORATION
M. Greenfield KM 14, Merville Access Road, Merville, Paranaque City
Telephone Nos.: (02) 8211805 to 06
Per DTI NCR Permit # A2-184 Series of 2006

Your $ can earn more with PSBank's HIGHER RATES

	$1,000 to 9,999	$10,000 to 49,999	$50,000 to 99,999	$100,000 and up
1 month	3.00%	3.13%	3.25%	3.50%
2 months	3.13%	3.25%	3.38%	3.63%
3 months	3.25%	3.38%	3.38%	3.69%
6 months	3.25%	3.38%	3.44%	3.75%
12 months	3.38%	3.44%	3.50%	3.88%

*Quoted rates are subject to change without prior notice.
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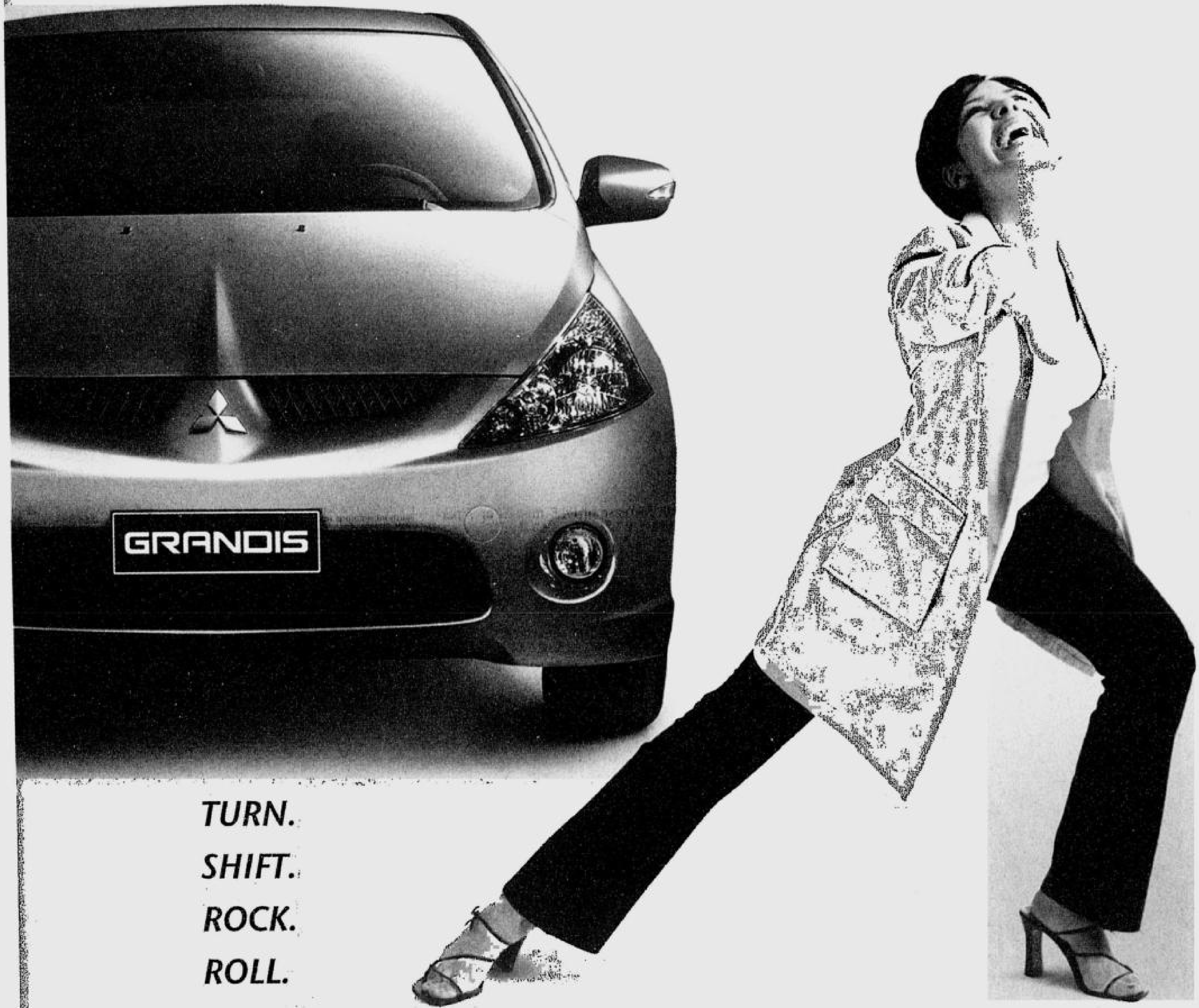

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BCDA to bid out 6-hectare prime lot in Fort Boni

Terms of sale readied; auction to be set soon

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE BASES CONVERSION DEVELopment Authority (BCDA) is set to auction a 6-hectare lot in front of a police school north of Fort Bonifacio in Taguig City, said BCDA president Narciso Abaya.

In an interview after Monday's press conference held by Fort Bonifacio Development Corp., Abaya said the government had been preparing the terms of the bidding and that it might possibly sell the property within this year or next year.

Abaya refused to divulge the value of the property or the expected proceeds from the sale, saying he would only give the details of the plan when the bid terms were completed.

He, however, said sales proceeds would be earmarked for the modernization program of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the conversion of former military bases such as Clark Air Base, Subic Naval Base , John Hay and Poro point into industrial and logistics hubs, as provided by Philippine laws.

BCDA is also preparing for the sale of residential lots in Fort Bonifacio that are currently occupied by ranking and retired officers of the AFP.

This will be pursued despite pending cases that seek to determine the true owners of the lots which, according to an earlier appraisal, could fetch P30,000 per square meter.

ABAYA

BCDA last month invited appraisal firms to submit bids for the contract involving these lots.

The lots include 35.5 hectares in the Joint United States Military Advisory Group (Jusmag) property, occupied by the Southside Homeowners Association Inc. (SHAI); 25.8 hectares occupied by the Navy Officers Village Association Inc. (Novai), and 33.6 hectares that presently house military facilities.

BCDA is authorized by law to convert former military base lots in Metro Manila into commercial/industrial/residential property for civilian use.

The law (RA 7227, enacted in 1992) also states that 32.5 percent of the proceeds should be used for "the transfer of the AFP military camps and the construction of new camps, the modernization of the AFP, the concessional and long-term housing loan assistance and livelihood assistance to AFP officers and enlisted men and their families, and the rehabilitation and expansion of the AFP medical facilities."

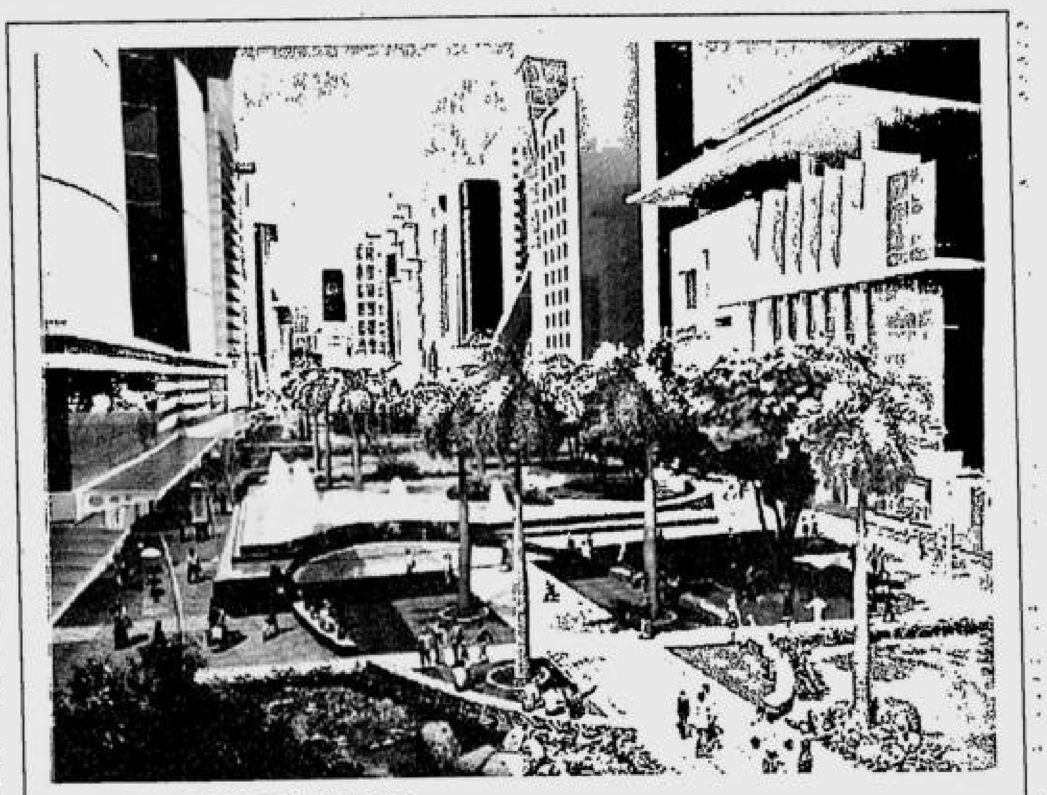
Based on a previous valuation, the Jusmag and Noval areas could fetch at least P18.4 billion in revenues for the government.

The 6.6-hectare North Bonifacio property that would be sold forms part of the 15 hectares of prime Fort Bonifacio land that the BCDA was planning to privatize this year.

BCDA vice president for corporate planning Aileen Zosa earlier said the property to be privatized this year also included an 8.5-hectare lot in the northern Central Business District.

Both lots are located north of S&R Price Mart, near the Fort Bonifacio Gate 1 along JP Rizal avenue. Its neighboring lot is a 10.5-hectare property owned by Metro Bank.

As early as October last year, major developers and certain embassies had expressed their interest in these prime pieces of property. These included the SM Group, Ayala Land, Fort Bonifacio Development Corp., the Robinsons Group and Megaworld Corp.



BGC RETAIL PROMENADE
An artist's perspective of the BGC retail promenade, the focal point of the city center of Fort Bonifacio Global City. It will be a linear park lined by two boulevards of innovative retail concepts.

Port privatization pushed

By Ronnel W. Domingo

PRIVATE SECTOR GROUPS AND PORT users yesterday said they wanted the government to immediately privatize the Manila North Harbor through a public bidding and a multi-operator scheme.

This was according to the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Export Development Council, Distribution Management Association of the Philippines and the Coalition for Ports and Shipping Modernization.

Donald G. Dee, PCCI president, said the groups needed to clarify things because of conflicting statements they have issued recently.

"PCCI has written a letter to the Philippine Ports Authority recommending that the privatization of Terminal 1 be done as soon as possible due to the need (for) transparent and competitive procedures to undertake the process through a public bidding," Dee said.

"PCCI also recommended for PPA to continue operating Terminal Two, while undertaking a thorough review and benchmarking on the need to modernize its operation for further privatization efforts," he added.

Dee said port users called on PPA to allow the nearby Harbour Centre and the South Harbor to operate in competition with Terminals 1 and 2.

"By competition, we mean allowing the same kind of services to each of the competing terminals and ports (such as those for bulk break and containerized cargo, and passenger traffic)," he said.

iBank income up 132%

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE Bank said its first quarter income hit P403.9 million, up 131.5 percent from year-ago's P174.5 million.

"We had a robust first quarter as trading profits, net interest income and fees registered healthy growth. We have seen a very steady improvement in income in the last few years as the bank expands its business," Tony Moncupa, iBank CFO said.

Total resources went up to P61.3 billion or 19.5 percent higher than March 2005 level of P51.3 billion. The expansion was fueled by the 30.1-percent increase in its loan portfolio to P27.0 billion even as the BSP reported that the industry had a 0.5 percent year-on-year decline in loans to 1.536 trillion.

"We believe that now is the time to expand credit exposure," Betty Romulo, iBank executive vice president and head of corporate banking said.

iBank recently said its shareholders have agreed to accept Union Bank's offer to purchase 67 percent to 100 percent of iBank shares at P42.50 per share.

FPHC net soars by 501%

FIRST PHILIPPINE HOLDINGS Corp. of the Lopez family posted a 501 percent increase in its consolidated net income in the first quarter to P3.7 billion from P622 million in the same period last year, a report filed with the Philippine stock exchange showed.

This was mainly due to a P2.7-billion gain from the maiden offering of power producer First Generation Corp.

Last February, First Gen raised P8.5 billion or $162 million from the sale of shares in the stock market. This resulted in the reduction of FPHC's interest in First Gen to 67 percent from 88.4 percent.

FPHC said the sale of the shares of California-based semiconductor and software supplier SiRF Technology Holdings Inc. (SiRF) last March, which fetched P199 million, also propped up profit figures.

A stronger peso also helped boost year-to-date foreign exchange gain to P552 million.

Without the one-time gains, consolidated net income would still be up 24 percent in the first quarter to P308 million.

In the meantime, First Gen posted a net income of $27 million , up 21 percent.

Finance mag cites SMIC

SM INVESTMENTS CORP. AND two of its subsidiaries were voted as among the Philippines' Top Ten Best Managed Companies in Finance Asia Magazine's May 2006 issue.

Investors polled by Finance Asia ranked SMIC as among the Best Managed Companies in the country, together with mall subsidiary SM Prime Holdings Inc. and banking unit Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

SMIC and BDO also made it in the list of Philippine companies with the best corporate governance. Both firms were also included in the list of companies with the best investor relations.

SMIC is spending as much as P15 billion this year for the SM Group projects including new shopping malls and retail stores. Real estate and tourism projects are also in the works, including the development of the 5,700-hectare Hamilo Coast in Nasugbu, Batangas into a world-class resort complex.

Smart seeks . . .

From page B1

ing the company's 3G service, which allows users to make video calls through their handsets, as well as to download and watch video clips, and browse the Internet at broadband speed.

Smart representatives will present its case for a tax incentive package before BOI officials next week in the hope of obtaining similar incentives that were awarded to Globe.

According to Chua, Smart planned to set up as many as 2,000 base stations to make 3G services accessible nationwide. At present, Smart has 800 base stations—a number which will rise to 1,200 by year's end according to the company's estimate.

On the other hand, Globe has 150 base stations and hopes to raise this number to 1,000 under the expansion plan to make 3G services accessible nationwide. It has committed to put up at least 2,500 3G base stations over the next five years as one of the conditions for its 3G license from the National Telecommunications Commission.

Globe was granted pioneer status based on the large amount it invested in the new technology, according to the BOI. Under this new registration, Globe was classified as a new operator of infrastructure and telecommunications facilities.

The company was qualified for a six-year tax holiday, duty-free importation of capital goods and other fiscal and non-fiscal incentives.

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Canon
Delighting You Always

BIR April collection rises 13% to P71.3B

Agency's highest single-month tax take but still P7.7 billion short of target

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE yesterday said its tax collection in April reached P71.3 billion, the highest single-month collection recorded by the agency.

The amount was 13 percent higher than the P63 billion collected in the same month last year but was P7.7 billion short of the BIR's April target of P79 billion, which the government said was necessary to meet its fiscal targets for 2006.

The BIR accounts for more than 60 percent of the national government's revenue collection. This alarmed certain officials who feared that the shortfall might jeopardize the government's goal of reducing the budget deficit to P125 billion this year from last year's P146.8 billion.

The government had high hopes of meeting its targets with the implementation of the Reformed Value Added Tax law, which raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent and the corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent.

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda earlier called for a revamp at the BIR and the ouster of its head, Revenue Commissioner Jose Mario Bunag, whom he blamed for the shortfall in collection. Salceda said there was no reason for the BIR to fall short of its target given the increase in the tax rates combined with growth in corporate earnings during the taxable period covered.

But the BIR said the criticisms were unfair considering that the agency's collection year-on-year had been improving. The BIR earlier said the target assigned to it by the national government might be too high.

"Instead of getting a pat on our backs for doing our best, we get scorned, and our commissioner is being taunted by him (Salceda) to quit," the BIR said.

The BIR earlier said that despite the increase in tax rates, its collection for April was partly affected by the increase in the creditable withholding tax claimed by corporate taxpayers.

The Philippine government is hard-pressed to meet its budget deficit target for the year, as it seeks improvement in its credit standing as assessed by international credit rating agencies. Fiscal authorities are banking on the expected higher revenue collection to secure more favorable rating from credit rating agencies.

The Department of Finance earlier said Moody's Investors Service had expressed willingness to improve its credit outlook on the Philippines from "negative" to "stable" if the government would be able to collect the expected revenues from the tax measures.

In the meantime, a Malacañang order lowering tariffs on imported oil is expected to adversely affect the Bureau of Custom's collection performance.

Customs Acting Commissioner Napoleon Morales said that with the cut in the oil tariff from the 3 percent to 2 percent, the BOC would lose P1.727 billion in duty collection. If the tariff would be slashed to 1 percent, the revenue loss would amount to P3.465 billion. And if the tariff would be brought down to zero, the BOC would lose P5.182 billion in potential duty collection.

The BOC is tasked to collect P197 billion for 2006, while the BIR is required to bring in P675 billion.

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FTA WITH EUROPE NEXT

Asean, S. Korea OK trade deal

NINE MEMBERS OF THE ASSOciation of Southeast Asian Nations yesterday signed a trade pact with South Korea and agreed with the European Union to work harder toward forging a similar arrangement.

The signing highlighted the Third Asean Economic Ministers-Republic of Korea Consultations held in Makati City, which coincided with the 12th AEM Retreat.

Soulivong Daravong, trade minister of Laos and co-chair of the Asean-Korea meet, said in a briefing that Asean members, except Thailand, signed a Trade in Goods Agreement with South Korea, which paves the way for the Asean-Korea Free Trade Area.

Daravong said the TIG was signed under the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation adopted in a meeting in Cambodia last April.

"What makes this more significant is that this is the first such agreement that the Asean signed with a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development," Kim Hyun-Chong, South Korea's trade minister, said.

The OECD groups affluent countries that help governments worldwide to prepare their nations face the challenges of a globalized economy.

Asean Secretary General Ong Keng Yong said Thailand was unable to sign the agreement yesterday but would do so as soon as it was able to settle "some domestic procedures."

Also, Ong said progress was made on a possible similar pact with the European Union following the 7th Asean-EU Consultations.

In a statement, the Asean and the EU said there was "still scope and much potential for both regions to pursue a more ambitious goal for closer economic integration."

Coming out of the meeting room, EU Trade Commissioner Peter Benjamin Mandelson said the ministers welcomed the Asean-EU vision report, which called on the two regions to take their economic partnership to "a higher level."

This refers to the establishment of a World Trade Organization-consistent Free Trade Area and expansion of economic cooperation.

Coco oil exports up 27%

By Christine A. Gaylican

PHILIPPINE COCONUT OIL EXports rose 27 percent in the first quarter of the year to 449,364 metric tons from last year's 354,122 metric tons, the Philippine Coconut Authority yesterday said.

The increased export volume translated to 7-percent improvement in earnings to $191 million in the first three months of the year from year-ago's $178 million, PCA Deputy Administrator for marketing Arturo Liquete Jr. said in a briefing.

A supply glut in the world market during the period pulled down the international price of coconut by 14 percent to $514.37 per metric ton from $603 per metric ton in the same period last year, Liquete said.

He said prices might improve the second semester as demand was expected to increase.

Traders said the market was tending to go softer early in the week due to an expected high level of shipments this month and a softer outlook for the soy complex futures at the Chicago Board of Trade.

Softer indications in the coconut oil market led some buyers "to test the market by contracting smaller quantities," one trader said.

Traders quoted coconut oil for May/June shipment at $580 a metric ton, CIF, Rotterdam, while June/July was quoted at $585/ton. These prices were lower by $5/ton from prices offered a week ago.

Japan firm ...

From page B1

operations in Aurora province."

The Japanese company, based in Chiba, Japan, wants to venture into coconut planting and coconut oil production to bring down the cost of coconut methyl esther, which now costs P120 a liter or more expensive than petroleum-based fuels.

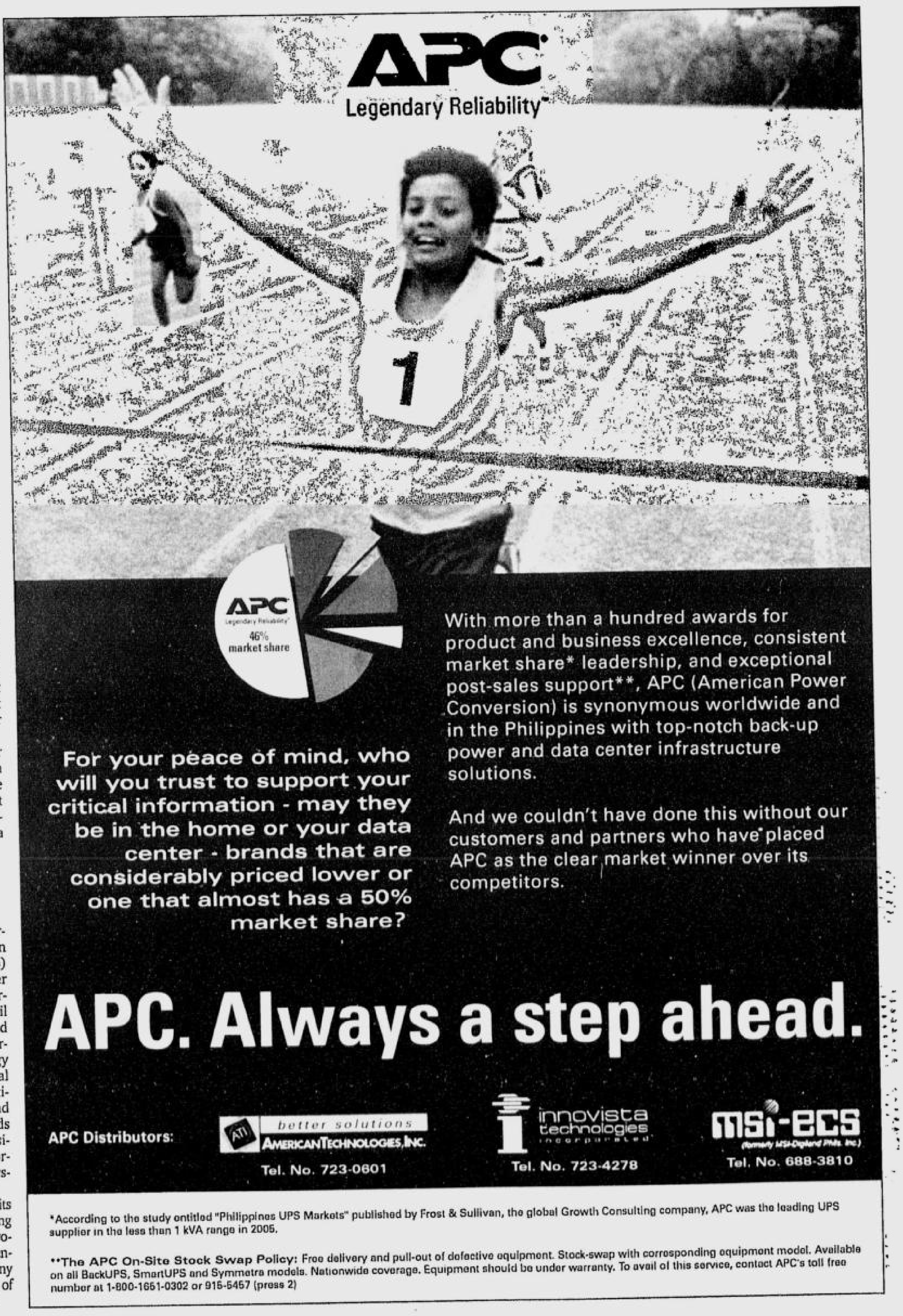
"Toyo Engineering would want to bring down the cost and is willing to venture into (large-scale) production," explained PCA Deputy Administrator Carlos Carpio.

Carpio said the agency would assist the company in looking for arable lands in Ilocos, Pangasinan and as far as Cagayan Valley to fill up its required area of 600,000 hectares.

"This project is for the medium term as it takes three years for a coconut seedling to actually produce coconut oil," noted Garin.

According to Toyo Engineering's corporate profile posted on its website (www.toyo-eng.co.jp) the company's operations cover hydrocarbon fields such as general chemicals, petrochemicals, oil refining, natural gas, and oil and gas development; non-hydrocarbon fields such as nuclear energy and power generation; industrial plant fields such as pharmaceutical, fine chemical, and food and beverage, and e-solution fields such as management and business consultation based on Information Technology (IT) and system design and construction.

For more than 40 years since its founding in 1961, Toyo Engineering has handled more than 1,400 projects globally, mainly in the plant engineering field. The company earned a consolidated net income of 3.3 billion yen in fiscal year 2005.



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Hyundai's Chung charged with embezzlement

Head of South Korea automaker linked to slush fund scandal

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA—PROSECUTORS indicted Hyundai Motor Co. chairman Chung Mong-koo in an embezzlement and slush fund scandal gripping South Korea's largest automaker.

Chung, 68, who has been in custody since his April 28 arrest, was charged with embezzlement and breach of trust, said Kang Chan-woo, spokespeson for the Supreme Prosecutors' Office, without disclosing specific amounts of money involved in those charges.

But the official said the tycoon created 103.4 billion won ($109.5 million; 85.4 million euros) in slush fund with the embezzled money and that prosecutors were looking into how that secret money was spent.

He didn't say when the first hearing would be held.

At the time of seeking an arrest warrant for Chung, prosecutors said he was suspected of embezzling about 100 billion won ($106 million; 85 million euros) in company money to create the slush fund and of breach of trust for allegedly incurring about 300 billion won ($320 million; 255 million euros) in damages to the company.

Hyundai offered no official comment on the indictment, but a company official who refused to be named said the automaker hoped Chung would return to management soon.

Chung's son, Eui-son, president of Kia Motors Corp., a Hyundai affiliate, has also been investigated, but wasn't indicted Tuesday.

Media reports said prosecutors plan to indict the junior Chung later.

Hyundai is suspected of using the slush fund, via at least two lobbyists, to seek favors from the government.

The lobbyists have been arrested on charges of receiving money from Hyundai in exchange for promises to help it win construction approvals and permits, and other business favors.

It is unclear whether the lobbyists bribed government officials.

The scandal comes as Hyundai and Kia Motors are aggressively expanding operations to achieve their goal of becoming the world's sixth-largest automaker by 2010.

In 2004, the latest year for which statistics are available, Hyundai and Kia ranked seventh in the world in production at 3.169 million vehicles, according to wardsauto.com.

Hyundai, maker of the Sonata midsize sedan and the luxury Equus, has factories in the United States, China, Turkey and India and plans one in the Czech Republic.

Kia is building a second plant in China and expects its first European factory to start up in Slovakia at the end of the year.

It announced last month it would build its first US factory in West Point, Georgia, scheduled to go on line in 2009.

Earlier this month, Hyundai reported a 37.5-percent drop in its first-quarter net profit from a year ago to 318.8 billion won ($341 million; 270 million euros). *AP*

A THAI vendor walks past an international brand advertisement in central Bangkok. According to researchers, Thai consumer confidence remained at a four-year low in April, mainly on concerns over the effects of high oil prices on the overall economy. AFP

CONFIDENCE SURVEY RESULT

Japan's consumers most upbeat in 16 yrs

TOKYO—JAPANESE CONSUMERS ARE AT their most confident in 16 years, thanks to improving employment and wage conditions, a government survey showed Tuesday.

The index of confidence among households with at least two people rose to 50 in April, up 2.1 points from March and the strongest since June 1990 when it reached 50.3, the Cabinet Office said in a monthly report.

A reading above 50 indicates that optimists outnumber pessimists.

The index is based on replies to a survey asking about four aspects of consumer sentiment—perception of general economic well-being, income growth, employment conditions and willingness to purchase durable goods.

Respondents were asked if there have been improvement in these areas compared with three months earlier.

The sub-index for general economic well-being rose to 47 from 45.1 in March, while the income growth sub-index increased to 46.2 from 43.5.

The employment conditions sub-index improved to 55.2 from 52.9 and the sub-index for willingness to buy durable goods edged up to 51.6 from 50.

The survey polled 5,040 households across the country on April 15.

Confidence is growing that Asia's largest economy is finally on a solid recovery path after a long slump, with the unemployment rate at a seven-year low of 4.1 percent.

Consumer spending underpins 55 percent of the economy and its expansion has played a key role in pulling Japan out of the economic doldrums.

Despite the apparently upbeat mood of consumers, however, Japan's average monthly household spending fell 2.1 percent in March from a year earlier, the third straight monthly decline, the government said last month. *AFP*

Telekom Malaysia denies deal with Sun Cellular

KUALA LUMPUR—MALAYSIA'S largest telecommunications company Telekom Malaysia denied yesterday a report it was in talks to acquire a stake in Philippine mobile operator Sun Cellular.

"We are aware that there is an official process to dispose a minority stake in Sun Cellular," said Telekom Malaysia group chief executive Abdul Wahid Omar.

"However, there is no active discussion on our part with Sun Cellular," he told reporters.

The Edge financial weekly reported over the weekend that Sun Cellular, owned by the Philippine-listed Digital Telecommunications Inc, is wooing two Malaysian companies including Telekom Malaysia in its search for a strategic partner here.

Although dismissing the report, Abdul Wahid said Telekom would be interested in venturing into the Philippine mobile phone market.

Sun Cellar of the Gokongwei group of companies is currently the third biggest player in the Philippines' highly competitive mobile telecommunications industry.

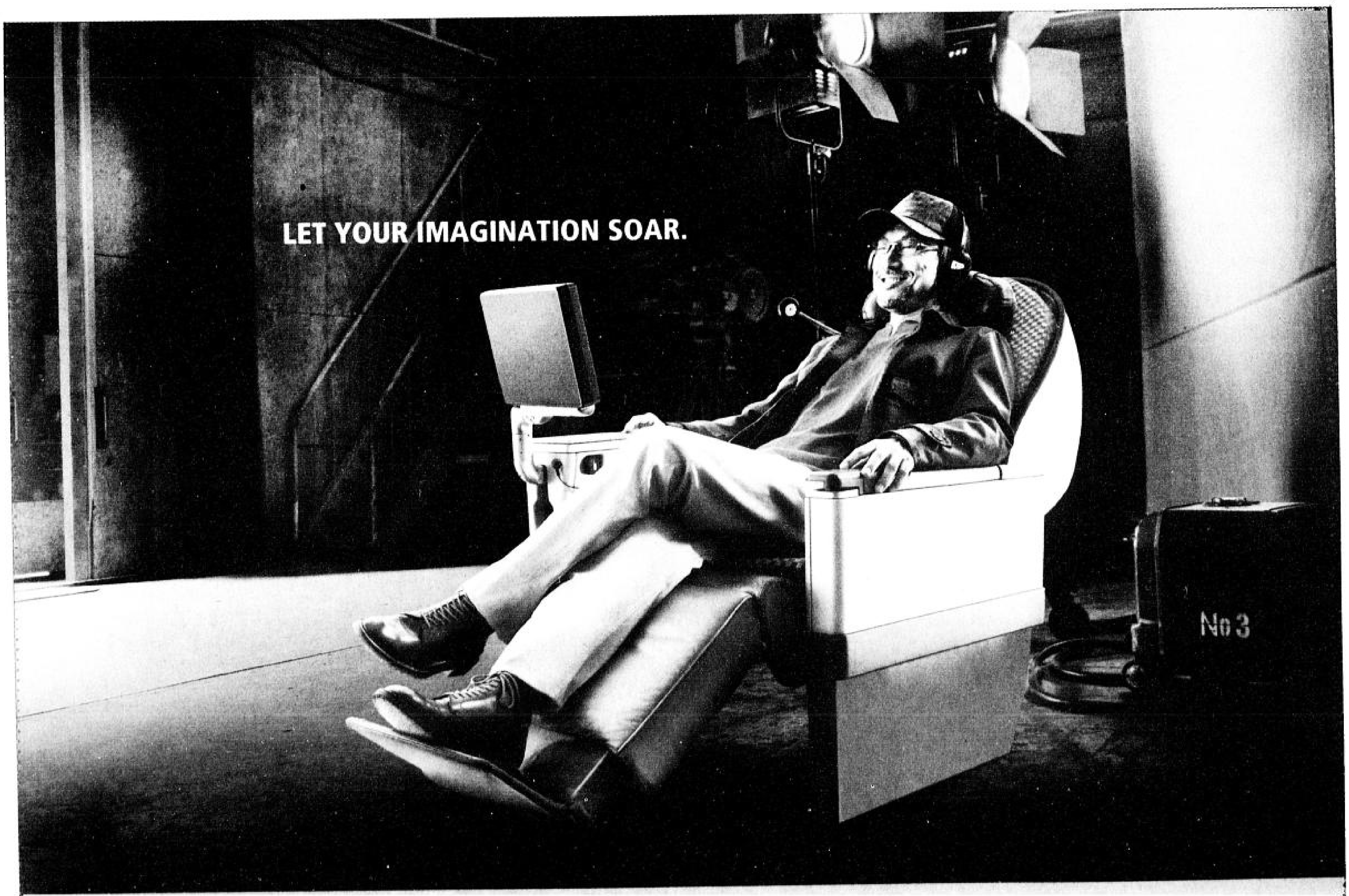
A deal with a foreign player would improve its chances of competing head to head with current leaders Smart Telecommunications Co. and Globe Telecom Inc.

Separately, Abdul Wahid said Telekom Malaysia could consider a stake in Saudi Telecom if the companies won a joint bid for Egypt's third mobile service license.

"We have an option to acquire a stake in Saudi Telecom. Let's see whether the company can win the bid ... let the license be won first and then we could consider a stake," he said.

Telekom, through its subsidiary TM International, has signed a memorandum of understanding with Saudi Telecom to bid for the Egyptian license.

Saudi Telecom is the largest mobile operator in the Middle East and North Africa based on revenues, which in 2005 stood at $8.8 billion. *AFP*



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"Mary, for You..."

JUSTINE LOUISE V. BENGZON

*Returned to the home of our Loving Father
on May 15, 2006 at the age of 13.*

Her beloved parents **Mikey & Chet**; sister **Celine**; brother **Mio**; grandparents **Alran & Nini Bengzon** and **Marcelino & Epeng Vergel de Dios**; uncles, aunts, cousins, other relatives and friends give thanks to the Lord for the blessing of her life.

She lies in state at the Christ the King Mortuary Chapels, Greenmeadows, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, May 20, 2006 after the 10:00 a.m. Mass.

---

*"Into Your hands, O Lord,
I commend my spirit."*

ROSARIO "CHERRY" A. CASAL

**joined her creator on May 14, 2006
at the age of 66**

"My heartfelt thanks to friends, family and most of all to God's precious gifts, my children: Maricar, MayAnn & Ron, Michael & Grace, Mark Danny & Camille, and Mia: grandchildren: Angelica, Cayla, Gabby and Hipolita."

Her remains lie in state at the White Plains Chapel, Nathan St., White Plains Subdivision, Quezon City

Interment mass will be on May 18, Thursday at White Plains Chapel, 9 A.M.

She will be laid to rest at Christ the King Crypt, Greenmeadows.

Psalm 91:1-2
He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."

In lieu of flowers, we would appreciate love offerings for the Casal charity projects.

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loved one.

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❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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Sa Pag Ala-ala ng Ika-1 Anibersaryo ng Pag-Yao

ni

MELCHOR MARTIN DULDULAO

Na Namayapa noong ika-17 ng Mayo 2005

*Ang kanyang na-ulilang may bahay, anak, mga apo, mga kapatid at iba pang mga kamag-anakan sampu ng mg malalapit na kaibigan ay nag alay ng pang-umagang Banal na Misa
sa:*

San Fernando de Dilao Church, Paco, Manila
Sto.Nino Church, Pandacan, Manila
Our Lady of the Abandon Church, Sta. Ana, Manila
St. Pius X Church, Onyx, Manila
St. Vincent de Paul Church, San Marcelino, Manila
Minor Basilica of Black Nazarene, Quiapo, Manila
St. Anthony of Padua Church, Singalong, Manila
St. Anthony Shrine, Bustillos, Manila
Shrine of Our Lady of Loreto, Manila
National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Better Living., Parañaque City
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church, Multinational Vill., Parañaque City
Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary Church, Sun Valley., Parañaque City
Shrine of Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, Reclamation Area, Pasay City
Five Wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Talon, Las Pinas
Virgen Maria de Guia Chapel – Franciscan Servites, Multinational Ave, Parañaque CIty

Sa mga naki-isa sa pagdadalamhati, lubos na nagpapasalamat ang kanyang pamilya at mga na-ulila. Isang maliit na pagtitipon sa pag-gunita ng kanyang pag yao ang gaganapin sa Virgen Maria de Guia Chapel– Franciscan Servites, Multinational Ave., Multinational Village, Parañaque City sa Miyerkoles – Ika-17 ng Mayo 2006 sa ganap 7 :30 ng gabi.

Our beloved MAMA

CONCORDIA "Cording" CEÑA ESPINOZA

Served her community as a
**homemaker, public school teacher,
barangay leader, city councilor, civic leader**

peacefully joined her CREATOR and our PAPA, the late ***H.A.P ESPINOZA*** *on May 13, 2006, at the Nueva Ecija Doctors Hospital, Cabanatuan City at the age of 77.*

Fondly called ***Mamang / Mama Cords/ Ate Cords*** by nieces, nephews, grandchildren, relatives and friends whom she loved dearly in her lifetime.

Her sisters **Naty, Lina, Alma**; brothers **Gaudencio & Constancio**†; sisters-in-law **Albina, Mely, Lily & Alicia**; brothers-in-law **Impiong**†, **Lucing**†, **Manolo**†, **Tito & Jun**† request the pious readers to pray for eternal repose of her soul.

We, her children, grandchildren & great grandchild are very thankful to the Lord for giving us the chance to show our devotion to her.

Nennette & Monching Bacani
Monchito, Kris & Sasa

Joji & Boy Reyes
Olga & Verns; Jaja; Kit, Christine & Maxim; Bidang

Boots & Sitsoy Francisco
Dominic & Cezar

Daisy & Ricky Enriquez
Erika & Erick

Jojo & Daisy Manuel
Joma, Monica & Timi

Jun & Aying Navarro
Aissa & Carlo

Raymund & Mod Blase

Her remains lie in state at the Stọ. Niño Chapel, Kapt. Pepe Subd., Cabanatuan City and will be cremated after the 8:00 AM Mass on Saturday, May 20, 2006.

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION

In compliance with Section 5 of R.A. No. 9048, a notice is hereby served to the public that **DIONITA G. GUDEN** has filed with this Office a petition for change of first name from **DELIA** to **DIONITA** in the Certificate of Live Birth of **DELIA A. GAMBOA** who was born on **December 16, 1956** at **PURA, TARLAC** and whose parents are **ALFREDO GAMBOA** and **SUSANA AGANON**.

Any person adversely affected by said petition may file his written opposition within this office not later than May 19, 2006.

NORMA S. DIPUTADO
City Civil Registrar

(PDI--May 10 & 17, 2006)

DENTISTRY ACADEMY HOLDS MEET

The Academy of Dentistry International, Philippines Section, (ADI) will hold its First Quarterly Meeting for 2006 on Wednesday, May 17 at the Executive lounge of United Laboratories, Inc in Mandaluyong City. The program will have two parts. The first part will be devoted to the business meeting which will address the following agenda: finalization of criteria for the Recognition Award, outreach projects, fund-raising drives to help finance ADI activities, progress reports by key officers and various committee chairpersons. The second part will feature two interesting presentations by academician (active member) Dr. Isabel Campos-Bustos and clinician (guest lecturer) Dr. Alfonso T. Lagaya, M.D., MDM, who will talk on "New Dimensions in Denstistry: Accupuncture and Accupressure." According to Dr. Antonio A. Baldemor, ADI President and Dean Eliza G. Puzon, lucky members will have a chance to win a 3-day/2-night all-expense paid trip to Hongkong/Disneyland as Recognition Prize.

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NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **The Babes Pig Producers, Inc.** is applying for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as **Domestic Producer of Piglets** on a **Non-Pioneer** Status with capacity of **5,000 Piglets Per Year** and with project/plant site located at **Purok 3, Suntan Street, Panalipan, Catmon, Cebu.**

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI within three (3) days from the date of this publication.

(Sgd.) RUDY B. CAÑA
Director
Project Evaluation and Registration Department

(PDI–May 17, 2006)

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

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80 units 6.0 KVA Uninterruptible Power Supply	8,800,000.00	LBP Funds	1,000.00
200 units DOT Matrix Printer	6,400,000.00	LBP Funds	1,000.00
1 lot Two (2) Years Lease Rental of 24 units Brand New Digital Copier Machine	3,126,000.00	LBP Funds	1,000.00
1 lot Blade Server	16,000,000.00	LBP Funds	2,000.00

Bidding is on **June 14, 2006** at 1:00 PM and Bid Documents may be obtained from the General Services Department, 25th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar corner Dr. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila, **upon payment of the required non-refundable fee.**

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the Pre-Bid Conference scheduled on June 1, 2006 at the abovementioned address.

All particulars relative to **Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract** shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of **RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).**

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder(s).

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PDI–May 17 & 24, 2006)

More Classified Ads on pages A4, A8, A11 & A21

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Gov't to borrow ₱104.5B in Q3

BTr to issue Treasury bills, bonds

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU OF THE TREASURY said the government would borrow P104.5 billion from the domestic market in the third quarter this year, 21.2 percent less than the P132.6 billion borrowed during the same period last year.

The government borrows locally largely through the regular auctions of Treasury bills and bonds.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz told reporters in a press briefing yesterday that the government need not borrow as much money from the domestic market this year due to the narrowing budget gap.

The budget deficit stood at P146.8 billion last year and is estimated to be cut to P125 billion this year.

"It is only natural that the borrowing requirement of the government will be less, being consistent with the improving fiscal deficit," Cruz told reporters.

The BTr said in a report that of the P104.5 billion scheduled borrowing for the third quarter, P46 billion will come from the issuance of Treasury bills, or government securities with tenors of one year and less.

The government would also auction off P58.5 billion worth of Treasury bonds, or government securities with medium- to long-term maturities.

T-bonds to be offered in the third quarter is lower than the P77.9 billion offered in the same period last year.

The BTr said the T-bonds to be auctioned off in the third quarter would mature in seven, 10, 20, and 25 years.

The BTr attributed the expected improvement in its budget deficit figure to the estimated increase in revenue collection, partly due to the increase in the value-added tax rate and the corporate income tax rate.

The reformed VAT law raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent starting February and has increased the corporate income tax rate from 32 to 35 percent.

The actual impact of the higher tax rate for VAT and corporate income tax, however, remains to be seen as the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the government's main revenue collection agency, has yet to realize the expected proceeds of the tax measures.

The BIR was reported to have posted a revenue collection shortfall of about P7 billion in April, although the revenue agency stressed that its collection performance was much better than what it recorded during the same month of last year.

The BIR was tasked to collect P79 billion in April alone, and P675 billion for the entire year.

Peso continues fall, down to 52.37 vs $

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PESO YESTERDAY FALTERED to a fresh four-month low of 52.37 against the US dollar on rising corporate demand ahead of the import season as well as concerns over rock-bottom domestic interest rates, currency dealers said.

After shedding 44 centavos on Monday, the local currency lost another 22 centavos at the Philippine Dealing System versus the previous day's 52.15 to the US dollar.

It was the currency's weakest finish since closing at 52.385:$1 on Jan. 27 this year.

The peso opened at the intraday high of 52.25 and closed near the intra-day low of 52.42 to the US dollar, while volume turnout amounted to $572.5 million.

"This is the technical correction that we've been waiting for since we came from the 56:$1 level in September-October last year. Since then, the market has been moving only one way, up, (favoring the peso) and is thus due for a technical rebound," said Jose Emmanuel Hilado, treasurer at BDO Private Bank and president of foreign exchange association ACI Philippines.

Hilado said this was nothing to worry about since the peso has gained a hefty 6 over the last few months and a technical bounce favoring the US dollar was healthy.

He expected the market to next test the 52.90-53:$1 levels before the currency resumes its bullish trend.

"Nothing has changed as far as the country's credit fundamentals are concerned," Hilado said. "Of course, the other thing is that interest rates based on Treasury bill rates are too low."

He agreed that peso-denominated government securities were losing their appeal to offshore investors because the difference in the yield compared to issues abroad was narrowing.

"You have a situation where there's a possibility of a fresh (interest) rate hike in the US and Philippine rates are at the level not good for the local currency," Hilado said.

Hilado said the average yield of 91-day Treasury bills of about 5 percent, for instance, reduced further by tax, was not competitive versus the dollar inter-bank offered rate of 5 percent and the three-month LIBOR (London Interbank Offered Rate) of 5.17 percent.

Electric cooperatives readied for spot mart

By Abigail L. Ho

IN PREPARATION FOR THE START OF COMMERCIAL operations of the wholesale electricity spot market in June, market operator Philippine Electricity Market Corp. (PEMC) is conducting capacity-building sessions with 71 electric cooperatives in Luzon and Visayas.

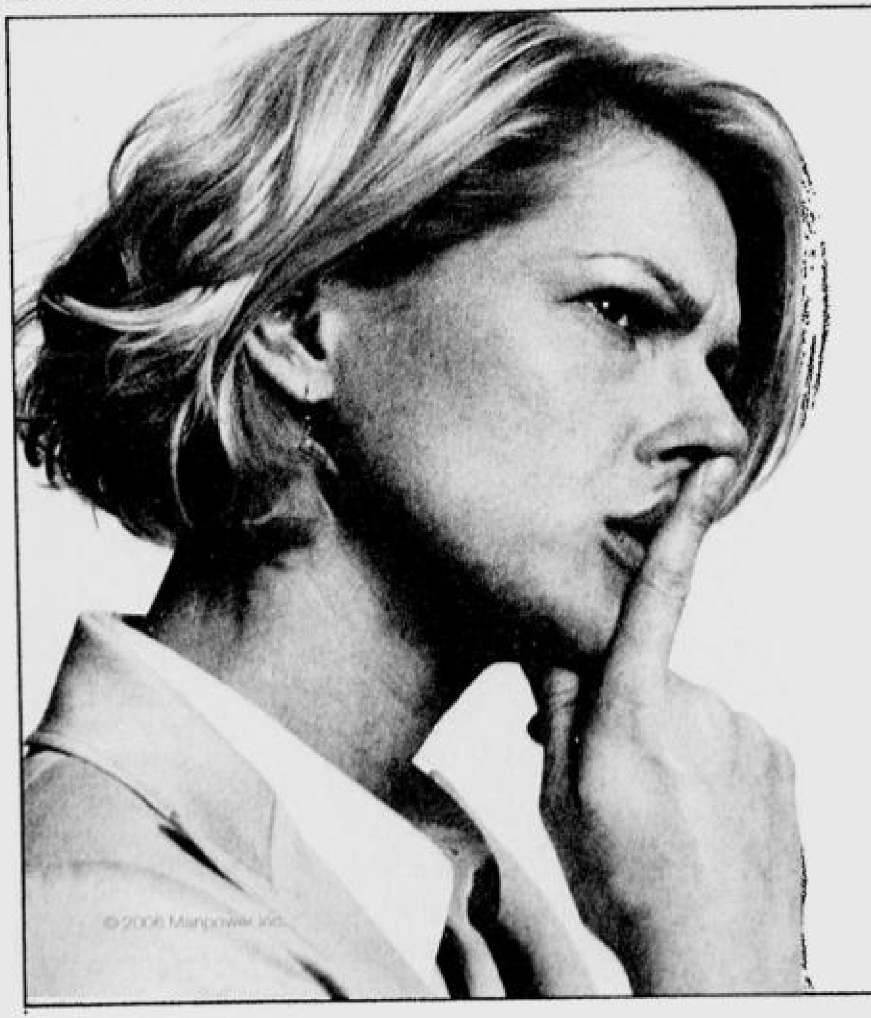
PEMC participant development officer Cerise Manuel said these sessions would prepare the cooperatives to become participants of Wesm.

"The training sessions are designed to provide professional skills, develop and instill willingness rather than compulsion in participation, and improve and accelerate market understanding and preparedness," she said in a statement yesterday.

For his part, PEMC president Lasse Holopainen said Wesm saw the electric cooperatives as integral parts of the electricity bourse as "they are not only the main conduits of power to consumers in the countryside, but are also among the primary instruments of change in their communities."

Under the Wesm, consumers such as the electric cooperatives, distribution utilities such as the Manila Electric Co., and other large-scale power buyers will all have equal opportunities to purchase power at the best possible price via the electricity bourse.

Electricity will be traded via the Internet on an hourly basis. Much like trading in the stock market, electricity prices are not fixed. These will fluctuate depending on the supply, demand and even the time of trading.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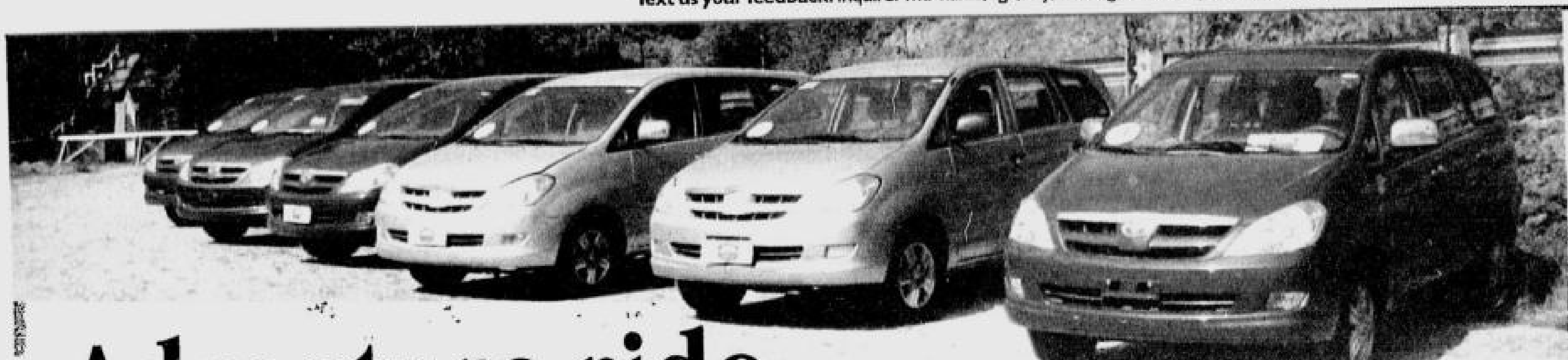

Adventure ride with Toyota Innova

By Charles E. Buban

LAST YEAR, TOYOTA MOTOR Philippines started what it dubbed the Innova Road Trek, an adventure packed ride wherein teams representing various motoring media outfits go to several destinations of a particular region (last year was Panay Island) and try to earn points from the various activities prepared in each of these stopovers.

As Ariel de Jesus, TMP supervisor for PR and sales promotion, reminded, this event is not a road race. Instead, the Road Trek's fun challenges are designed to test the wits and physical prowess of each team while at the same time allow each member to experience the performance of the Toyota Innova through various road conditions.

This year's edition of Road Trek is especially significant not only because the event brought the participants to two of Mindanao's more prosperous and delightful cities—Cagayan de Oro and Davao—but also this is the first time the INQUIRER participated (after failing to field a team last year).

Like last year, the Road Trek's itinerary and challenges remained a surprise. However, the 10 participating teams (Team INQUIRER is made up of columnist Andre Palma, digital prepress specialist Genie Lagman, IT section head Noli Navarro and this writer) got an idea of what the first challenge would be. Upon arrival at the Cagayan de Oro airport, we headed straight to our assigned Innova where huge inflatable rafts are strapped on top.

Conquer a raging river

Indeed, the first day of the Road Trek not only made us conquer a raging river but also faced our fears (among the challenges included were jumping off a three-meter-high rock rising in the middle of the river and a time trial wherein the team must paddle against the current, afterward jump off the raft, flip it, then turn it over again and then hop back into it).

After this grueling task where we paddled all day (covering over 12 km and encountering 14 rapids) under the sun's scorching heat, we headed to another destination, which we thought is our break.

Wrong guess. Next stop was Mapawa Nature Park where each team must send a representative who must ride a zip line (like a cable car), slide courtesy of a rope-and-pulley contraption and hold a plastic of water that must be thrown at a target several meters down. Afterward, another team member must rappel 12 meters down biting a spoon filled with five cashew nuts (if you drop one, this will be subtracted to your team's overall score).

It was already dusk when we arrived at the Koresko Hotel. After freshening up, we headed to Tabing Dabing Dagat restaurant for our much-deserved dinner.

The sleep was most welcome since we needed it the following day as the teams

ADVENTURE/ B2-2

THE INNOVAS: All strapped up and ready to go

PHOTOS BY GENIE LAGMAN

THE INQUIRER team paddling after conquering the raging river and each member's fears.

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Aveo 1.5 A/T	610,000	69,000	48,166	33,205	25,595	18,214	14,592	12,715	7,310
Aveo Special Ed 1.5 M/T	636,000	69,000	50,392	34,530	26,777	19,056	15,266	13,302	7,610
Aveo Special Ed 1.5 A/T	676,000	79,000	53,062	36,361	28,196	20,066	16,075	14,007	8,089
Optra 1.6 L A/T	713,000	89,000	56,565	38,669	29,521	21,009	16,830	14,665	8,644
Optra 1.6 LS M/T	738,000	89,000	57,781	39,694	30,704	21,860	17,504	15,253	8,844
Optra 1.6 LS A/T	783,000	89,000	61,787	42,339	32,633	23,366	18,718	[illegible]	9,383
Optra Special Ed 1.6 A/T	796,000	99,000	61,966	42,461	32,927	23,433	18,772	16,387	9,527
Optra Wagon 1.6 M/T	806,000	99,000	63,123	43,264	33,642	23,871	19,123	16,663	9,683
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Taking the Ranger north

MY DRIFT

Andre Palma

THE FORD RANGER PICKUP HAD a very long day ahead of it. As it sat there, in one of the front parking slots of the Balintawak dealership, little did it know of the drive that it would have to put in, much less anything of its final destination for the day. The road ahead had the slopes of the Banawe rice terraces, in Ifugao Province, as its final stop, easily 300 kilometers away from where the truck was standing.

It struck me of just how visually varied the vista of the green, stepped slopes of one of the wonders of the world would be from the hazy congestion building before my eyes of the northbound lane of Edsa. The roads ahead would mostly be tedious two-lane provincial highways, but there were quite a few notable sections marked in our road book. We would have to pay our way—dog fighting with tricycles, hand tractors, buses and trucks—to be able to play in some of the best driving roads in Northern Luzon.

Speed traps

The first task at hand would be traveling the entire length of the North Luzon Expressway, in a loose convoy with faster Fords. It may sound ludicrous but there was a constant worry of the toll-road's peculiar speed traps. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, even if the current Ranger turbo diesel a generation back in technology from the common rail, direct injection (CRDI) engines now proliferating among the competition, it is able to break the mandated speed limit on the NLEX with confidence. Conviction is another matter altogether.

Acceleration is relatively short winded, but helped along by two important factors: the good ratios of the 2nd and 3rd gears, the length of the 4th cog, plus the useful torque of the engine. The 2.5-liter, 12-valve single cam turbo develops a decent, but dated 120 bhp, while pull is hefty at 280 Nm of twist. The XLT unit's 5-speed manual is also a saving grace for the veteran platform as the automatic transmissions of the competition uniformly concede ability for the sake of comfort and ease of use.

Ride comfort

The ride comfort of a pickup is never something that one looks forward to on long, drawn-out drives and the Ranger is not an exception. The plotted 12-hour drive, plus stops would surely knock a little wind from driver and passengers. As excited as one can about their destination, one can get quickly deflated when you start to wonder why you left your kidney belt at home. The drive would be no walk in the park; it would be work and hard labor, at that.

Work began, in earnest, as our vehicle began to ascend Dalton Pass, on the border between Nueva Ecija and Nueva Viscaya. The twisty cement highway, with its notorious truck and bus traffic, would be a test of the truck's basic balance and vehicular fundamentals. The key to any good driving experience is patience and flow, but it would not be embellished to say that momentum is the Ranger's friend—actually its best friend in the conditions of Dalton Pass.

True highlight of the drive

Also, as harsh as this genre of vehicle gets, it seems fortunate that this Ford is actually also a rather forgiving platform when one makes mistakes. The occasional, mistaken but necessary dab on the brake pedal, for mid-turn correction, is not something that will elicit too much tension. Just don't try to stand on the middle pedal while turned, as the Ranger is not that sympathetic. The descent down Dalton seemed to confirm the stipulation of such a long drive, but the banked Banawe uphill and downhill run was the true highlight of the drive.

The key to the tackling the tight, twisty sections headed for the rice terraces is the Ranger XLT's Limited Slip Differential. Twice the truck wanted to lose traction and get especially sideways from a dangerous recipe of speed, gravel, camber and elevation change. While more essential and suited for rough road excursions, because of its ability to mechanically manage power to the wheels with traction, mistakes are made less embarrassing, less fussed by the Ranger's trick diff.

Upon clearing one of the final crests, just about sunset, we caught a glimpse of the first few rice terraces. I'll have to admit I was rather disappointed, as huts and houses now share the same real estate—and therefore the same postcard views—of what is probably the 8th Wonder of the World. The saving grace was the drive, through some rather testing roads, where the Ranger showed its true worth.

Mother of all treks

FULL TANK

Al Mendoza

IT HAPPENED TWO WEEKS ago.

Woke-up at 2:30 in the morning, was on the road at 3 and, by 3:30, I was at the domestic airport. Did all that, not in a shy way, to catch a 5 a.m. flight to Cagayan de Oro City—which I did.

So, what brought me to the airport at this ungodly hour, when Rustie Otico would just be crawling his way out of a bar to attempt to climb an FX on his way home to Dasmariñas, Cavite?

Well, it was Danny "Sir John" Isla inviting. If it's Sir John doing the inviting, I raise my hands in surrender.

"How can the Lennon-McCartney duo be complete without you?" Sir John would say.

I'll cry instead other than say no.

Ariel "SPO2" de Jesus, with the magnetic appeal, did the usual herding of motoring journalists. Turns out he used this mother of all treks as his swan song at Toyota.

I didn't feel fine when I learned Ariel was leaving Toyota.

When I got wind of it, something in me revolted and, almost, I approached Ariel and seriously thought of telling him, "You can't do that."

Sue Elijah Marcial has been terribly orphaned by this—Ariel being Elijah's well-loved mentor all these years.

Sir John, as well as Raymond Rodriguez, Sonny Guerrero and even Jing Atienza—not to mention Sherwin Chualim—had all been left, for now, groping in the dark to find someone to fill the yawning void created by Ariel's highly improbable "she's leaving home" caper.

Ariel has been basically known as the Toyota spark plug all these years, dating back to the glorious days of the one and only Vince Socco, a super TMP marketing/PR guru before becoming a pillar of Toyota Motors Asia-Pacific based in Singapore for five years or so now.

Ariel will join—if he hasn't yet—Subaru as marketing/PR chief, bringing into this tiny vehicle company an arsenal of 13 high-powered years spent entirely as Toyota's front man for media affairs.

Ariel, 34, said he was quitting Toyota because "I have reached the crossroad of my life. Working at Toyota was simply phenomenal, amazing. Frankly, I have chosen the untested path. But I feel the need for change."

As his last performance "of my life at Toyota," Ariel assembled 45 or so motoring journalists from Manila and Mindanao—the biggest ever—for a four-day road trek with Innova in Cagayan de Oro and Davao.

After a whistle-stop at CdO Toyota topped by a sumptuous breakfast hosted by Betty Lu, the only lady owner of a Toyota dealership in the country, the entourage took to a breathtaking whitewater rafting in the huge, majestically beautiful Cagayan de Oro River. It was quite an experience riding through 14 mostly jolting rapids, making Pagsanjan a mere kid stuff.

Next morning, the drive to Davao City on board 10 Innovas afforded everybody a chance to savor the splendor of nearly 300 kilometers of mostly exotic zigzags cradled by exquisitely carved-by-nature mountains of Bukidnon and Davao, many of them handsomely craggy any doubter once he sees them can begin to believe again that there is, indeed, God.

But the trip to Davao, where the Toyota dealership of the inimitable Boyet Lim is tops in Southern Mindanao, wouldn't be complete if I didn't drop by my buddy Ken Angeles' place, the Yellow Fin Tuna Restaurant beside "After Dark." Over there, the adobo tail of the yellow fin tuna has no equal anywhere in the world. And that's just one in a menu that includes other exquisite dishes like the mouthwatering *ubol-ubol* and greaseless Bisayang chicken.

All that would add to Toyota lore, not to mention my personal account of Ariel's emotional "hello goodbye" to Sir John in Davao in a one-on-one on the eve of the flight back to Manila.

Good luck, Ariel-san. You have my prayers.

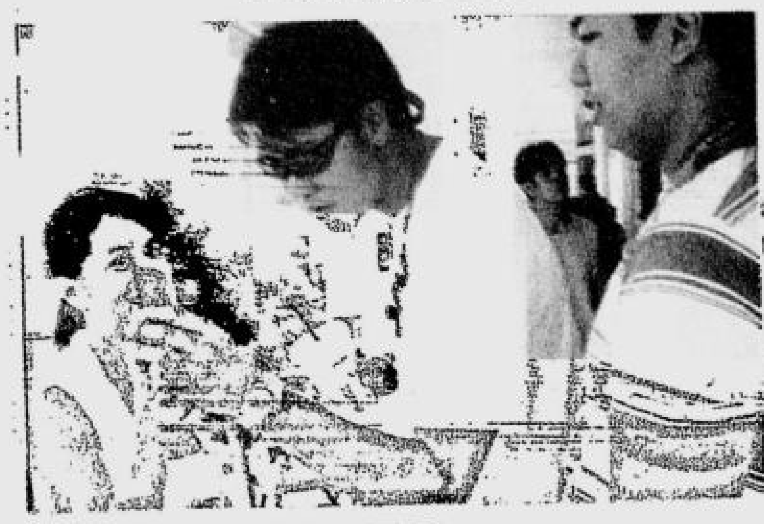
***

QUOTE ME. Extraordinary patience is what you need so that you can avoid killing a jeepney driver.

***

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

MOTORSCOPE



VIEW TRAFFIC VIA SMART 3G

Joel Gallego, center, and his friend experience Smart 3G during a stopover at a gas station last Holy Week. The two male motorists see traffic video streamed real time on a 3G-capable phone. Smart is the first mobile operator in the country to offer 3G services since it started opening its network on a free trail basis to its subscribers with 3G capable handsets in key cities last Feb. 14.

New Caltex gasoline

CHEVRON PHILIPPINES INC. RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT CHEVRON'S exclusive fuel-cleaning ingredient Techron is now available in all grades of gasoline at Caltex service stations nationwide.

The specially formulated ingredient helps prevent a car's vital engine parts from building up deposits, which can adversely affect vehicle performance, increase emissions and result in a car using more gasoline, thus driving up the cost of running the car.

"Caltex gasoline mixed with the Techron cleaning ingredient is unbeatable at protecting car engines from the effects of performance-robbing deposits, helping ensure it delivers optimum power, economy, pickup and a smoother ride," said Roger J. Organ, manager for Chevron's Product Engineering, Regulations and Technology (PERT) team for Asia Pacific, Africa and Pakistan.

Chevron officials stressed that even one tankful of Caltex with Techron is enough to clean up deposits on the fuel injectors. They also said that ongoing use of Techron can minimize harmful combustion chamber deposits, which can lead to knocking, and results in higher emissions and loss of power during acceleration.

Volvo Tour de Force

IT'S A TOTAL SHOW OF FORCE WITH THE DYNAMIC FLEET OF VOLVOS coming to key destinations in the metro starting this weekend. The Volvo Tour de Force will kick off at the Alabang Town Center on May 19-20 where sleek and stylish Volvos will be on display.

Volvo Tour de Force, a series of roadshows where Volvo brings its cars closer to its market, is also one big continuing game of chance where on its final leg, a lucky Volvo roadshow goer will drive home his brand-new Volvo S40.

The Tour de Force roadshows, normally at malls in Metro Manila, will also serve as venues for the qualifying legs of the Tour de Force Game. Upon signing up at any Volvo Tour de Force venue, guests will get a chance to participate in the Tour de Force qualifying race. Winners in the qualifying rounds will get a limited invite equivalent to a slot in the Tour de Force Final Leg in December at the Volvo Makati Showroom.

A lot more is in store for visitors in these roadshows. Aside from choosing from a variety of stylish and powerful Volvo models, guests will also be treated to an assortment of fun activities and prizes for the whole family.

Newest car accessories shop

THERE'S A NEW ONE-STOP CAR ACCESSORIES SHOP IN TOWN WHERE a fantastic deal awaits sedan owners. It is called 7 Flags Auto Tints & Accessories Shop, located at Unit 12, La Fuerza Plaza One on Pasong Tamo, San Lorenzo, Makati. For only P1,990, sedan owners can avail of Heat Bloc auto tinting with a 3-year warranty, done in an air-conditioned, all-weather, dust-free tint room.

Conveniently located near the country's leading car dealers and easily accessible to motorists, 7 Flags specializes in auto tints and HID light conversion systems. Clear films and specialty films which have state-of-the art features are also available for more discriminating car buffs. The shop offers the widest selection of tints for its customers, with as much as 30 tints to choose from.

Also 7 Flags has a unique black room for testing car lighting systems, particularly HID (High Intensity Discharge) illumination. Aside from tints and HID lamps, 7 Flags will carry vehicle security systems, Rocket Batteries from Korea with a 2-year warranty, wiper blades, car horns and other items.

The shop is open from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. It is owned and operated by Glacier Auto Tints & Accessories Inc. (tel. nos. 812-1678 and 894-3797).

FAST LANE FLASHBACK

Driver's passion for motorsports

IT WOULD SEEM LIKE IT WAS just yesterday as Jose V. "Boy" Ochoa shares his love story with cars and motorsports. This former race car driver-turned-car restoration business maverick has always been and will always be a fan of the fast lane.

"I started racing in 1969 and I was champion in my class with the first rally that I joined in, I drove a Dodge Colt. It was at that time that I became a proud member of Cam Wreckers Association, along with the likes of Serge Osmeña, Alfredo Lim and Dodjie Laurel and many others."

IN THE GREENHILLS Grand Prix in 1972, Ochoa posed with his Ford Escort '69.

Every field in motorsports

From then on, 58-year-old Ochoa recalls getting his hands on every field there was in motorsports—drag racing, slalom, karting, and circuit racing.

"I also became a navigator in the mid '70s. There was even a time when we were the only Asians driving a Peugeot in the Hong-Beijing Rally in 1985," he narrates.

IN THE 1ST Hong Kong-Beijing Rally in 1985, Ochoa and his Peugeot wowed other foreign delegates as they race to the finish line.

Eventually, he became the president of the Philippine International Karting Association (Pika) in the '80's. It was also around this time that he decided to stop racing to avoid any bias in his duties as Pika president.

It is this singular love for cars and motorsports that he took a detour from his mechanical engineering degree at the Mapua Institute of Technology to get involved in the business of selling car accessories.

Repair, restoration

Gradually, he was led to venture into what he knew and loved best-car restoration. Up to the present, Ochoa is actively involved in the repair and restoration of all sorts of cars.

"I've restored a Ford Escort that holds much memories to me for I've used it before in races. We also have here the Pope's car, a Ford Bronco that was lent to him while he was in Davao and a limousine that he used here in Manila during his visit. I guess it's just really in my system, this thing that I have for cars," he ponders with a smile.

Playing favorites

Yet, he could not avoid playing favorites.

"I've had numerous cars in the past, but my all-time favorite is the Austin Mini Cooper with a 1275 cc engine. It was my first race car and I used it in slaloms and circuit races in the '60s. In 1999, I bought another Mini Cooper, the last of the old Mini. It's in my office now."

This savvy car restorer's prized cars and other chosen pieces from his treasure trove of motorsports memorabilia were among the featured items in the auto show of the Automobile Association Philippines (AAP), held recently at the PICC Forum, CCP Complex, Pasay City.

Ocho could not conceal his enthusiam at the thought of showing precious parts of his past.

"It is really a pride and joy of any former motorsports enthusiast like me to share the mementos of our glory days in racing. Reminiscing the past, we hope to inspire others to excel in the same kind of passion that we did. It is a way for them to appreciate that in order for anybody to stand out in anything he does, he must always treasure it and devote it his time," he ends.

THE INNOVA convoy speeds through the Del Monte plantation.

TEAM INQUIRER is represented by (from left) Noli Navarro, Charles Buban, Genie Lagman and Andre Palma.

Adventure ride with Toyota Innova

From page B2-1

drove southward to Davao City, a more than 300-km drive that would take us and the Innova through winding highways and mountain passes.

However, enjoying the sights or taking short naps is out of the question as we are tasked to count all the Innova banners that are placed along the way. A correct count would earn us extra points.

Warmest welcome

The adventure finally ended in a Toyota dealership in Davao City where, just like the one in Cagayan de Oro, gave us their warmest welcome.

The last day of the event saw us transferring to the Pearl Farm in Samal-island (a 40-minute ride from the Davao City pier) for rest and recreation and of course, the awards night.

The media team from Cagayan de Oro emerged as champion after scoring the highest number of points, besting nine other teams composed of media men and women from Metro Manila and Davao.

Last year's champion Auto Review bagged the runner-up position. The C! Magazine/Tech & Tuner/Auto Extreme team won third place.

Although the INQUIRER team finished fourth, the rankings no longer mattered as all of us discovered something more important that night. Thanks to the Innova Road Trek, we not only discovered some of the hidden wonders of Mindanao (at least for us based here in Metro Manila) or faced our fears or our ability to take risks—we also now know why the Innova is a top seller and why it is on every Filipino car buyer's short list.

The Murano identity

ON THE ROAD

Aida Sevilla-Mendoza

IN A CNN FEATURE ON CARLOS GHOSN last Saturday night, the man who saved Nissan Motor Co. from the brink of bankruptcy was shown stepping out of a black Nissan Murano. I found the scene symbolic, for it was during Ghosn's awesome turnaround of Nissan in Japan several years ago that the Murano was created.

Now the president/CEO of both Nissan and Renault (which has a major stake in Nissan), Ghosn spends half the month in Tokyo, half in Paris. In a way, his work schedule reflects the half-Asian, half- European identity of the Murano. Named after an island suburb of Venice that is renowned for its beautiful glass works, the Murano successfully blends the flair of Italian design with the tuned power of one of Japan's foremost sports cars, the Nissan 350Z.

Ultimate

Aside from this Eurasian identity, the Murano can also be described as the most stylish, ultimate luxury crossover, combining the smooth ride, power and responsive handling of a sports sedan (it is built on the same platform as the Altima) with the flexible cargo capacity of a wagon and the high driving position and roominess of a medium-size sport utility vehicle.

Although the Murano by its very name is identified with high-quality glass, it is not as fragile. True, like all crossovers its four-wheel independent suspension was designed more for highway travel than rugged off-road terrain, but its 4x4 system and Vehicle Dynamics Control consisting of brake LSD (limited slip differential), ABS and EBD together with the power-assisted disc brakes on all four 18-inch wheels guarantee traction and stability when the going gets rough or slippery. The other safety features of the Murano are dual front airbags, curtain airbags, front seat active head restraints, high intensity headlights, fog lights and keyless remote entry with theft alarm.

Stand out

Aside from its sleek, head-turning body sculpture, three things make the Murano stand out among its competitors in the luxury SUV segment: the smooth power delivery of its Xtronic Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), its agility despite its size and weight, and rear seat ride comfort.

CVT, instead of shifting through gears like a conventional automatic transmission (AT), operates with pulleys. It changes ratios continuously, more quickly and more smoothly than a normal AT, always matching engine speed to stay in the power band . This results in more efficient acceleration and should improve fuel economy.

Mileage

Overall mileage is supposed to average 8 km/liter in combined city and highway driving, but 4 km/liter is more like it. I started out with a full tank (82 liters) and after driving 257.5 km, the tank was one-fourth (20.5 liters) full. But then, the speeds at which I drove the Murano (180 kph at one point) must have affected its fuel economy.

Despite its 1829 kg max curb weight, the Murano is surprisingly nimble. Mated to a six-gear CVT, its powerful, ultra-quiet 3.5 liter V6 twin cam engine, tuned to produce 245 hp/6,000 rpm, delivers acceleration and handling as swiftly, as smoothly and as responsively as a sports sedan. The 318 Nm/3,600 rpm max torque benefits throttle response. At a given road speed, you can shift from D (Drive) to S (Sport) to raise engine revs 2,500 rpm.

Legroom

There is plenty of legroom for three tall adults occupying the back seat. By pulling a strap, you can recline the backrest so that rear seat passengers can lean back, stretch their legs and enjoy the ride. The rear seats also split 60/40 to accommodate lengthy cargo. When you pull a handy lever in the cargo area, the rear seats flop forward to increase cargo space to 81.6 cubic feet from 32.6 cubic feet.

All seats are luxurious black leather contrasting dramatically with the brushed aluminum panel and garnish in the roomy cabin. Euro touches: the steering wheel-mounted audio controls, the powered glass sunroof and 225-watt Bose audio system with seven speakers, subwoofer and 6-disc in-dash CD player. The driver's seat is power adjustable with memory, the rearview mirror is auto-dimming, aircon controls are dual zone with vents in the B-pillars, the pedals are power adjustable, door pockets flip out for easy access and the two-tiered glove box is big enough for a laptop computer. A dashboard monitor displays info such as average speed, time and traveled distance and there are three power outlets and cupholders.

Summing up, the Murano is a jewel of an SUV yet reasonably priced at P2.888 million.

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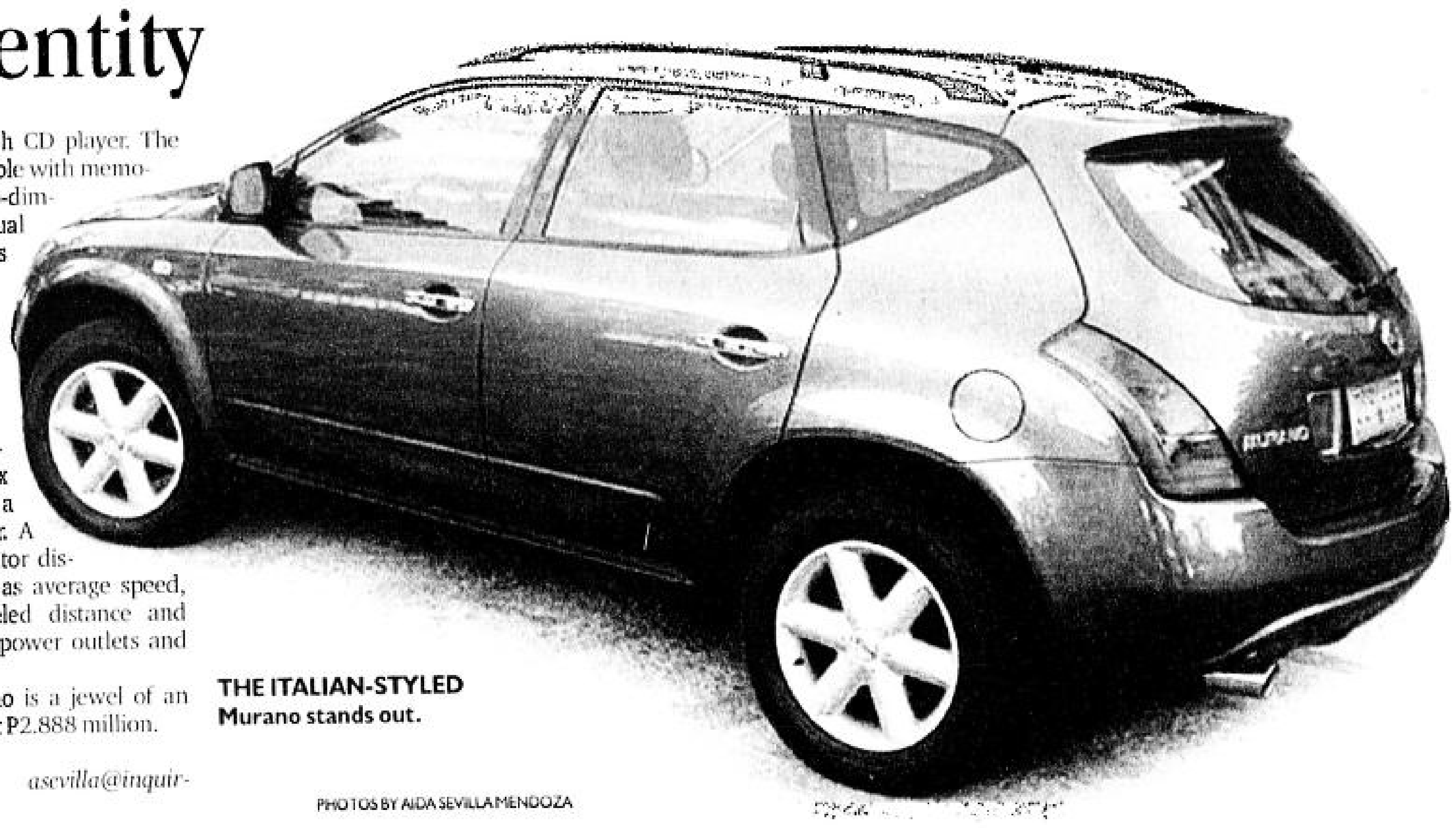
E-mail comments to ascvilla@inquirer.com.ph.

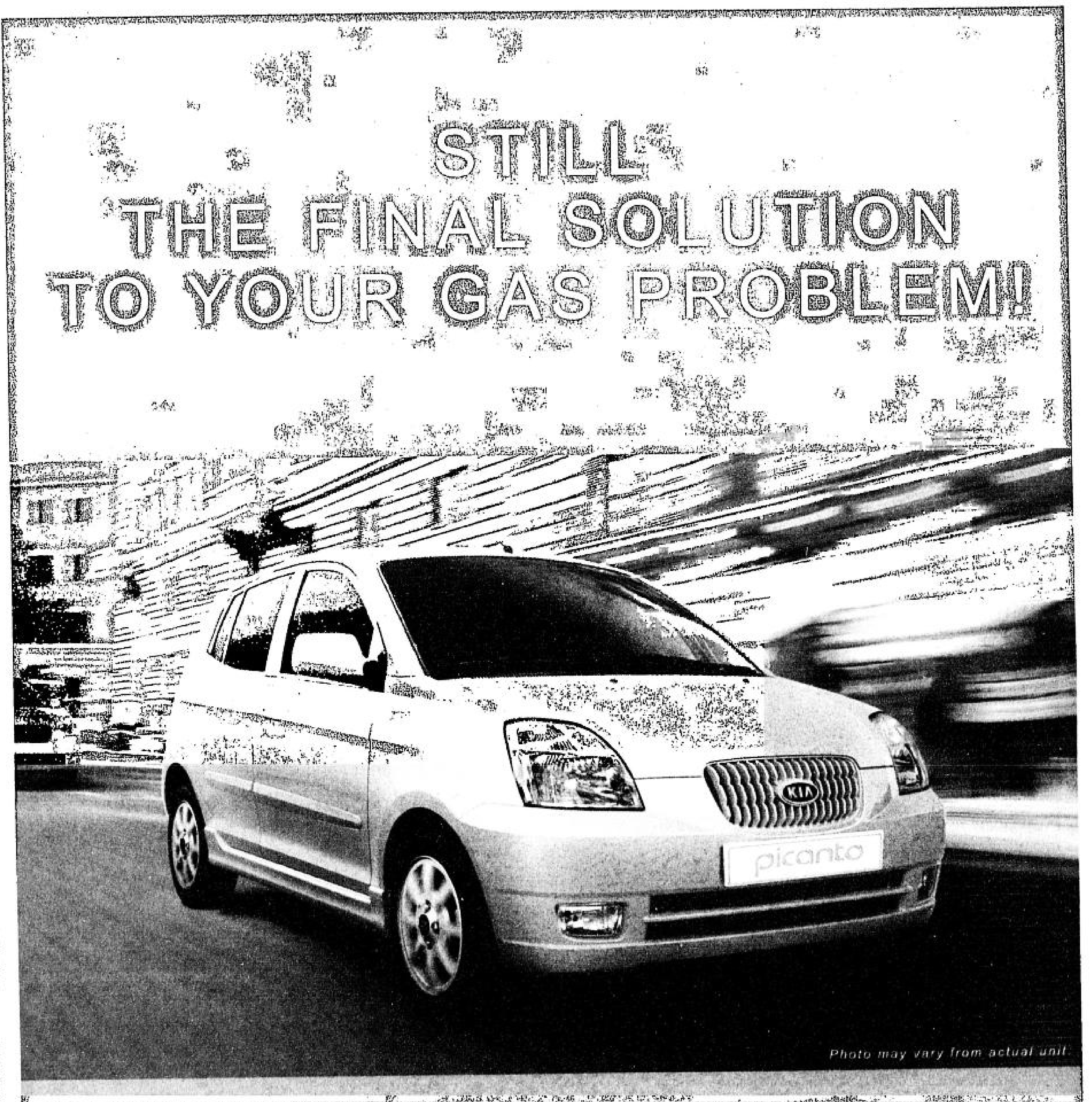


THE ITALIAN-STYLED Murano stands out.

PHOTOS BY AIDA SEVILLA MENDOZA

INSIDE, black leather and brushed aluminum garnish.

THE 3.5-LITER, V6 engine produces 245 hp/6000 rpm.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picanto
Photo may vary from actual unit.

The Kia Picanto-now available!

The highly respected ADAC (Allgemeiner Deutsche Automobil-club) confirms that the Picanto 1.1LX is the most economical car in Europe, outperforming all others in its class, delivering unbelievable fuel economy of up to 26km.* to a liter. Behold its stylish design inside and out. Be awed by its MPV-style utility. So go ahead. Make those trips, see the sights, enjoy your gimmicks. And find out why the Kia Picanto is the fastest-selling car in Europe.

1.1 SOHC engine combines performance with outstanding fuel economy.

Stylish fabric trim to match your car color and personality.

"Space Wizard" design allows 5 different seating configurations.

Versatile seating offers the luxury of space for passengers and payloads.

picanto

* The average mileage was based on a Kia Motors field test [illegible] Picanto with two passengers, running at a constant speed of 60 kph.

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Motorsports Awards caps first AAP auto show

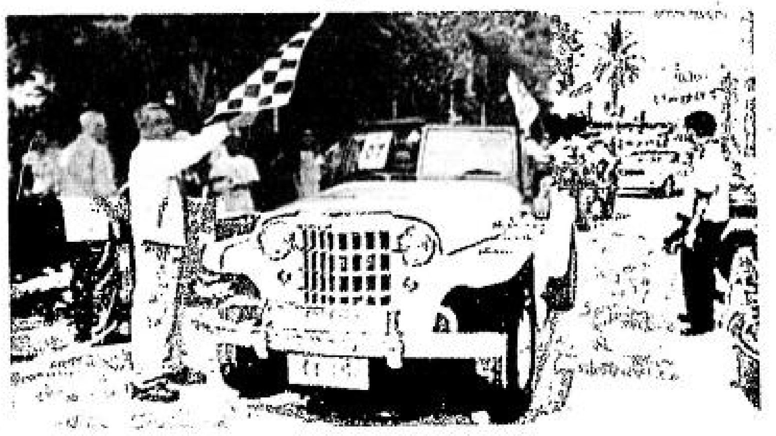
SOME OF THE MOST PROMINENT names in Philippine motorsports are this year's winners of the Automobile Association of the Philippines' (AAP) annual Motorsports Awards which capped the recently concluded 1st AAP Auto Show at The Forum, PICC Complex over the weekend.

The awards were a fitting climax to a week-long celebration of the AAP's 75th anniversary that saw the pillars of Philippine motorsports, both past and present, come together to celebrate and look back to the colorful history of auto sports in the country.

Awardees

The recipients of the AAP Motorsports Awards during last Sunday's closing ceremonies of the 1st AAP Auto Show were Leo Joel Cordero (drag racing), Dante Dungca (4x4), Michelle Bumgarner (karting), Alex Reyes (rally cross), Daryll Flores (slalom) and Jody Coseteng (touring).

Likewise awarded were the winners of the various motorsports competitions held during the three-day AAP Auto Show. In autocross, the category winners were Niño Sarte, best novice; Arthur Pasao, fastest rear wheel drive; Ivan Isada, fastest front wheel drive; Kunio Otaka from Japan, fastest car club entry; and Noel Rivera, fastest overall driver of the day.



AAP officials flagging off participants to the vintage car parade.

In the 4x4 category, 4-cylinder class, first place was won by Cocoy Ramos. In second place was Alain Lo while Bernie Feliciano copped third place. In the 6-cylinder class, the winners were Gibo Maningas (1st), Hirrian Mendiola (2nd) and Atoy Jamilla (3rd).

In the production category for diesel, first place went to Devor Angeles, followed by Rody Consunji (2nd) and Ishi Marocom (3rd), while in the production gas, first place went to Rissa Katigbak, followed by Jun Nocum (2nd) and MJ Mendoza (3rd).

Sponsors

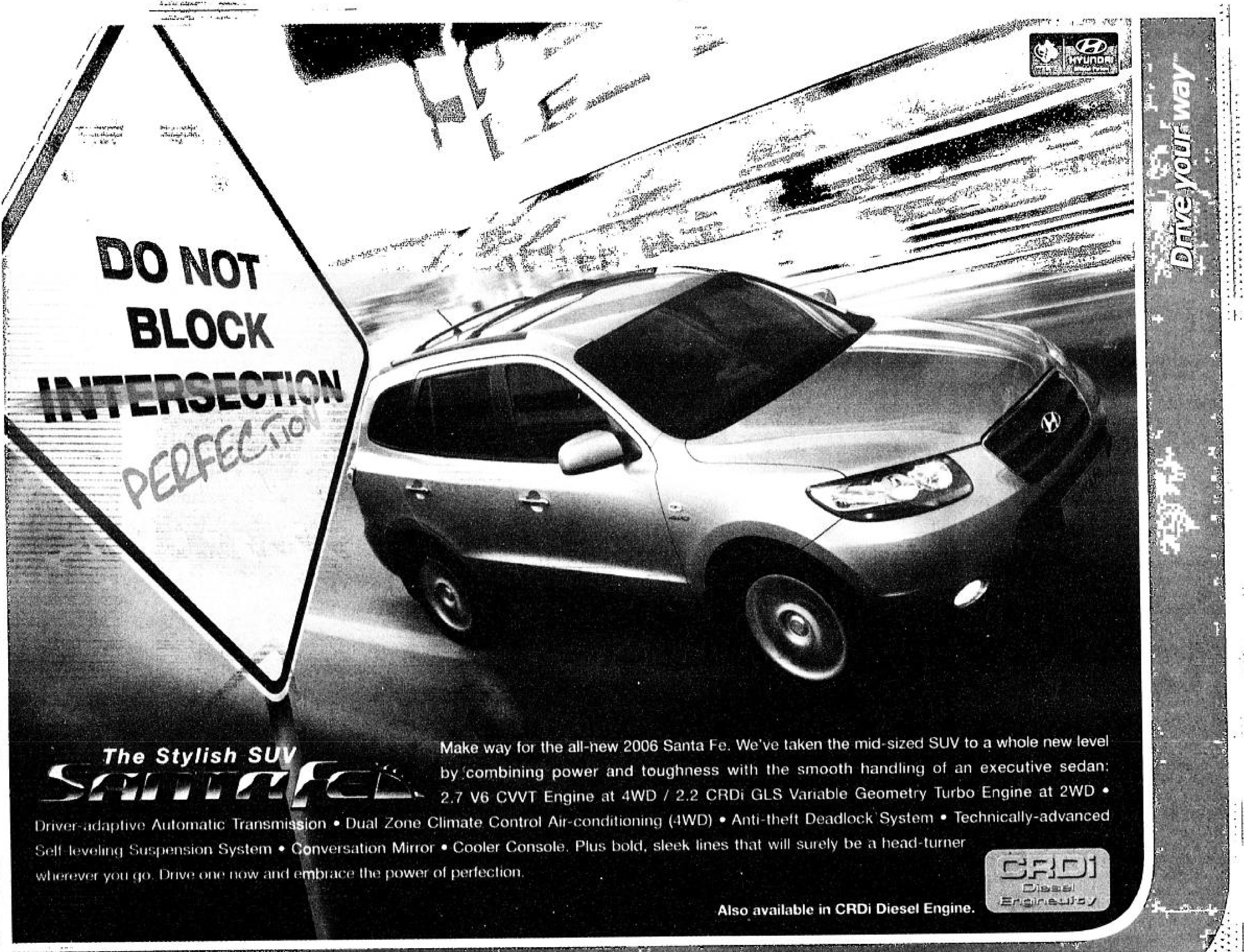
The 1st AAP Auto Show was sponsored by Petron Corp., Denso, Toyota Motors Philippines, Lufthansa German Airlines, PS Bank, Sustagen Premium, Lipovitan, Top Gear, NU 107, 105.1 Crossover and Jam 88.3.

The auto show was also supported by Hastravel.com, Inteco Group of Isuzu dealership, Ford Libis, Hyundai Asia Resources, Honda Car Makati (Pasig branch), Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp., Philippine Allied Enterprises (Bridgestone), and Mazda Philippines.

Other highlights

Another highlight of the AAP diamond jubilee celebrations was the AAP Photo Gallery, which included famous race/rally drivers Dodjie Laurel, Dodo Ayuyao, Baby Luna, Jovy Marcelo, Robert Aventajado, VIP Isada, Mandy Eduque, Boy Ochoa, Paeng Nodalo and Pocholo Ramirez.

The Vintage Cars and Clubs Rally was also a successful event of the AAP jubilee. About 65 cars participated in the Metro Manila motorcade which was held in cooperation with the Department of Tourism.



The Stylish SUV
Santa Fe

Make way for the all-new 2006 Santa Fe. We've taken the mid-sized SUV to a whole new level by combining power and toughness with the smooth handling of an executive sedan: 2.7 V6 CVVT Engine at 4WD / 2.2 CRDi GLS Variable Geometry Turbo Engine at 2WD • Driver-adaptive Automatic Transmission • Dual Zone Climate Control Air-conditioning (4WD) • Anti-theft Deadlock System • Technically-advanced Self-leveling Suspension System • Conversation Mirror • Cooler Console. Plus bold, sleek lines that will surely be a head-turner wherever you go. Drive one now and embrace the power of perfection.

CRDi Diesel Engineering

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Summer jobs

Part 2

to be young • to be you • to be young • to be young • To be you! • 2bU!

The 2bU! Correspondents have done crazy things in the line of duty—become a gasoline boy, a supermarket bagger, an elevator operator, pose nude for artists, pretend to become a model, an actress, even a rockstar. The craziness continues this week as more correspondents try their hands at different summer jobs. What's it like to be a clown, a hotel kitchen aide and a movie ticket seller? Find out in this issue. We also have a story from The Philippine Plaza's Chocolate Girl who managed to turn her internship into a really sweet job.

Read on

Even without clowning around, I attracted the kids who gave me high fives

CHUBBY and "Chari" with young park guests.

Clown for a day

Text by Vanessa Arellano Doctor
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Nino Carandang

THAT ONE SATURDAY WAS MOST unusual, I dare say.

Normally, I wake up to thoughts of "Oh, no, I have to go to work again. Where's the ironing board?" But that particular day, I became Enchanted Kingdom's resident female clown, Chari.

And though my heart was racing with excitement and anticipation, it was nowhere near funny. In fact, just the thought of having to face hundreds of children and adults and making sure they like me filled me with dread.

Will I be an effective clown? What makes a good clown anyway?

EK head clown Chubby, who refused to have his real name printed, said there really was nothing to it. If you love what you do, everything should fall into place, he said.

Yes, including the jokes and wisecracks.

I have always considered myself funny, but most of my jokes are in no way near wholesome. Actually, most of the things I say that people laugh at are sarcastic and crude. They are not "clown jokes."

I started to imagine making a kid cry or drawing blank stares. While some people are terrified at the sight of clowns, there I was fearing becoming one.

"Relax, they won't know who you are," I kept telling myself during the briefing.

Chubby was very accommodating, making sure I did not throw up in my mouth every time he told stories about how some nasty children throw punches, pull your hair and then run away laughing.

I thought to myself, if these mean kids do not know who I was behind the makeup anyway, I could easily get away with throwing a couple of hits myself.

Wrong, of course.

Chubby told me that to be a clown is to surpass everyone in the practice of patience.

Anyway, if ever somebody harasses you while you're in character, you could always remember what they look like and then tell security after so those hooligans will get reminded of their folly, he explained.

Alas, there is no eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth rule in clowning!

Nice job

Luckily, during the hour and a half I walked around with Chubby, nobody dared do anything naughty.

But, oh, were the cameras flashing at all angles!

Being a clown also means getting used to twirling and smiling, because everywhere you turn there will always be someone or some group wanting to take pictures with you.

I went on a Saturday, so you can just imagine the crowd we drew. The more people came to us to snap away, the lighter I felt about being a clown.

Sure, there were kids who immediately pulled back out of fear, but they were trumped by the hordes that couldn't wait just to shake hands and give high-fives.

I did not even have to crack a single back-bending joke! Apparently, being dressed as a clown was funny and fun enough. After all, most of the park guests don't really talk much beyond "*Pwedeng magpa*-picture?" and "Hi, clown! What's your name?"

I guess to them clowns weren't really human, but merely characters. It's actually both delightful and sad.

Before I started braving the crowd, Chubby gave me a challenge. That was to make friends with at least 30 people.

Surprisingly, I met more than 60. And that was just in one hour and 30 minutes!

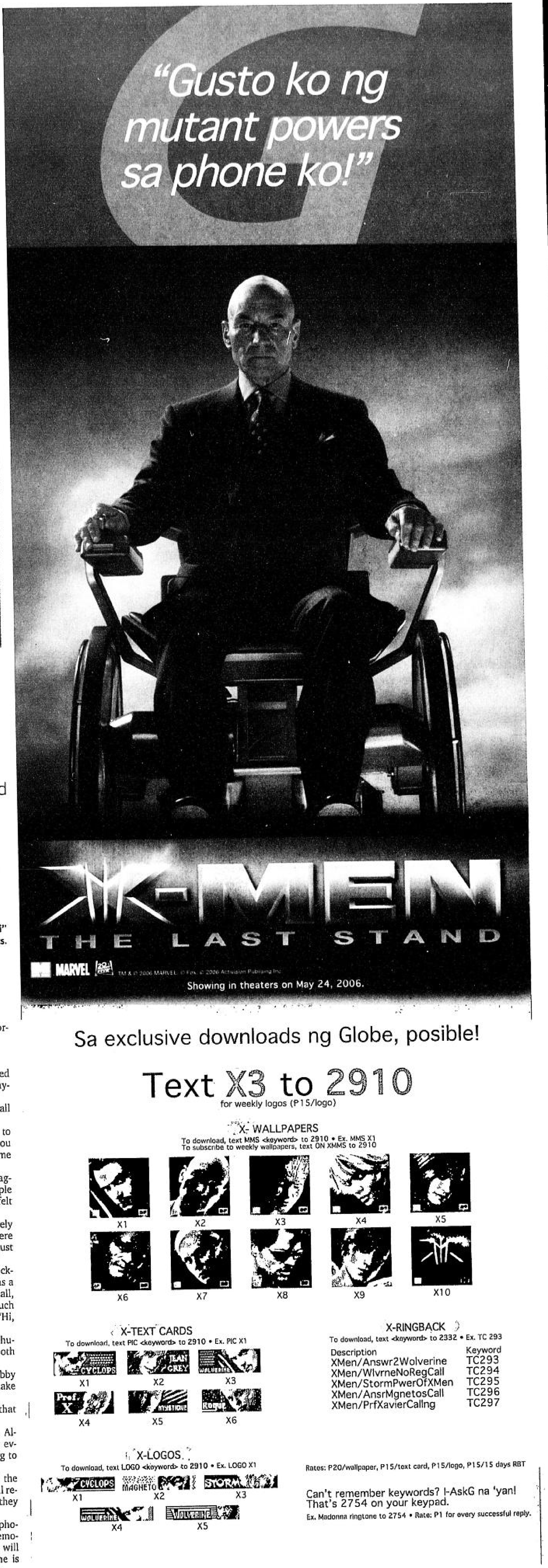
Behind the anonymity, I felt fulfilled. Although nobody knew who I was, almost everyone I met liked me without me having to say much.

I may not remember all the faces of the people I met, but I am pretty sure they will remember Chari the female clown when they look back.

I am now a resident of over a hundred photographs evidencing people's happy memories that day. And though most of them will probably never know that my real name is Vanessa, that's definitely all right with me.

Special thanks to Enchanted Kingdom Entertainment head Kat Gonzales and EK publicist and RubyComm head Ruby Paurom.

E-mail the author at ness_doctor@yahoo.com



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Hardwork Hotel

Text by Bianca Consunji
2bU! Correspondent
Photos by Charles Custodio

PUTTING the cookies in the oven

CHANNELING "Psycho" with the butchering team

A FEW YEARS AGO, I THOUGHT I WANTed to work in a hotel. When I first started out in college with plans of finishing Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management (HRIM), I dreamed of doing my practicum with the country's top hotels. But after a year of dealing with Math and other similarly abominable subjects, and because I wanted to write instead, I changed my mind and shifted to Journalism. (Not that it's easy, of course.)

However, the frustration was still there. I still wanted to work in a hotel, wanted to walk into a posh lobby with a sleek hairdo and sophisticated makeup. I wanted to supervise housekeeping as they went about their chores. I wanted to greet guests as they came into the hotel. And best of all, I wanted to sample the latest creations by the chefs. This showed just how much I knew about practicum training: nothing.

So when I heard I was going to work as a trainee for one day at the Hotel Philippine Plaza, visions of sugarplums (and chocolate cake and foie gras) started dancing in my head. Yasmine Hidalgo, the PR and Communications officer of the Hotel Philippine Plaza—formerly the Westin—told me I was going to work there on the day they were preparing for the Australia-New Zealand Association (ANZA) ball, so I had to steel myself for some serious labor.

"Wear flats, slacks and put your hair in a bun," she said. "And bring evening clothes as well so you can do the rounds with me when the guests arrive."

Since I wanted to look polished throughout the whole day, I chose black leather kitten heels (the closest thing I had to flats aside from flip-flops, which weren't allowed) as my choice of footwear over grubby sneakers. I immediately regretted my decision the moment I stepped into the kitchen—the floor was slick with oil and water, and I had to hold on to everything solid in my vicinity (a table, a chair, the good-looking chef at the dessert station) just to get my bearings.

Everyone else was wearing rubber clogs, and it took all of my self-control to avoid beating up and hiding a fellow trainee in order to get her clogs.

I was also given a chef's uniform emblazoned with "Dick" in red letters on the jacket. Dick, whom the other chefs told me had left the country, was apparently a big man who was probably a foot taller and 20 pounds heavier than me. This presented some problems with the uniform, but after rolling up the sleeves and tucking in every conceivable area, I set to work.

First course

My first task was to roll spoonfuls of meat into egg wrappers. The meat-filled cigars (or *lumpia* in simpler terms) were the first course for that night's ANZA event, an annual charity ball hosted by diplomats from Australia and New Zealand. The theme of the ball was "Chicago," based on the movie musical of the same title, and the organizers wanted the food to adhere to the theme.

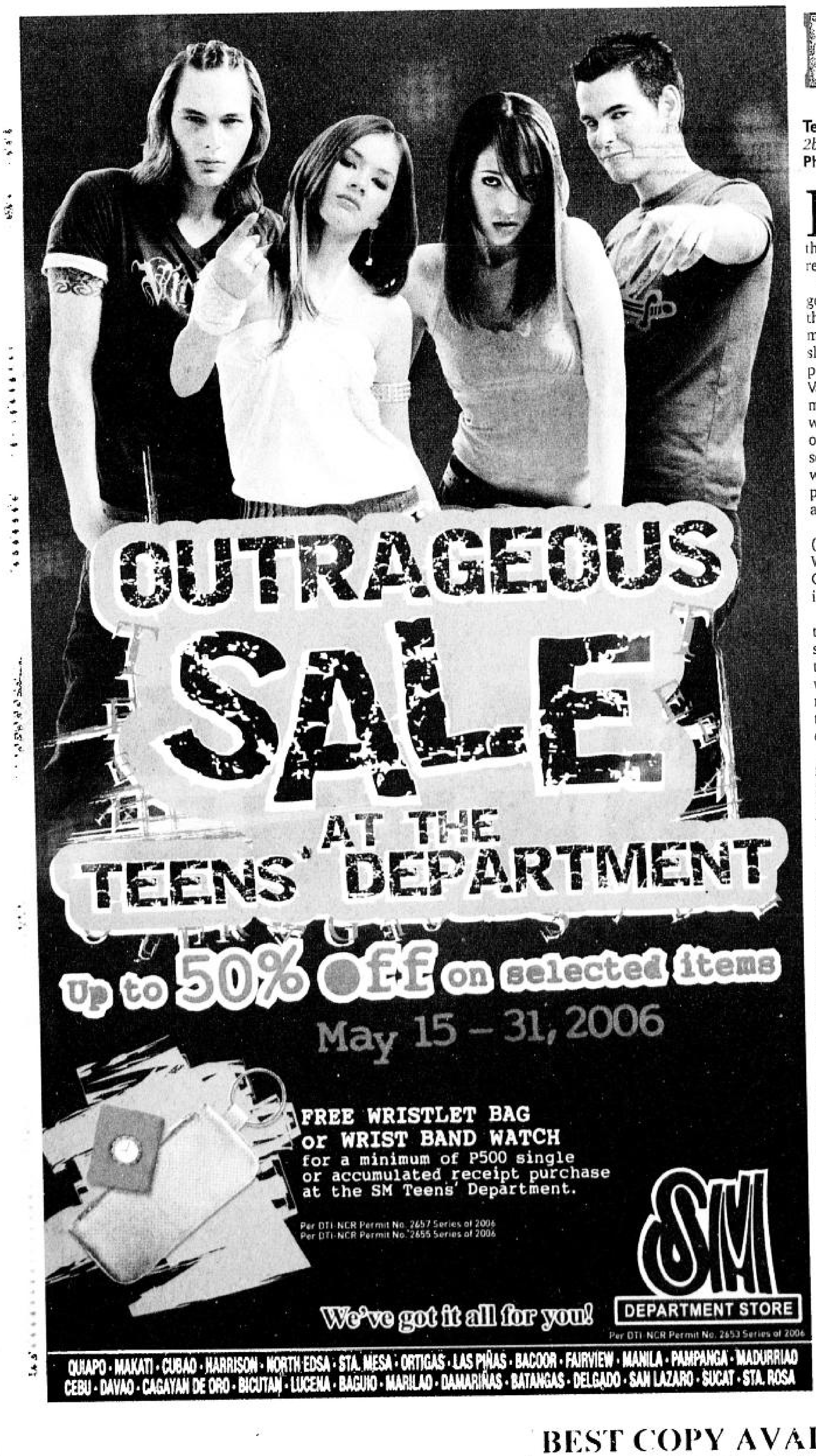
The work was basic: get a piece of egg wrapper, put a dollop of meat, add a dab of egg, roll it up and stack it on the pan. We had to make sure the rolls were all the same size, and that they were sealed neatly. Otherwise, the filling would leak while the rolls were being fried.

Unfortunately for me, it was nearly lunchtime when I started stuffing the meat into the wrappers, and the savory smells of the kitchen weren't helping my stomach any—a problem I didn't anticipate. I had always thought that chefs could just help themselves to anything they liked from the kitchen, but it didn't seem so. Everyone was focused on their work, and no one else seemed to be hungry. A chef or two went around tasting the dishes, but they didn't take any more than they had to.

After lunch, I went back for a different set of tasks—I had to assemble salads, fix cheese platters, and help the other chefs and trainees arrange the platters for the night's menu. Part of this included cleaning black tiles and smearing mascarpone cheese and pepper on them (they were going to be used as plates for the meat rolls) and steaming and wiping glass globe bowls.

After an hour or so of helping out with the physical arrangements, the chefs put me through the other areas: the bakeshop, cold kitchen, butchering area and the chocolate room. I couldn't resist going inside the giant freezers, although the whole time I was in them, I couldn't help but think of a classic episode of "I Love Lucy," where the unlucky Lucy Ricardo got stuck inside a freezer for hours. I asked if anyone had actually got locked in, and was answered with an amused "yes." I got out of the freezer immediately.

Some kitchen areas were much better than the others—I begged to stay in the chocolate room until my shift was over, but unfortunately, the chef in charge was a little too effective for my taste and finished the work at once. However, she let me and Charles, the photographer, pocket a few pralines after I finished working on a batch of chocolate truffles (I offered to come back to work some more after my shift.)



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I worked it at t

Text by Tammy David
2bU! Correspondent
Photo by Carlo Baviera

SELLING the drama... or comedy, or action

I ONLY WATCHED A MOVIE ONCE IN Eastwood so I was very excited to work in one of "the country's best state-of-the-art movie theaters," known for their reclining rocker seats.

Kevin Tan of Eastwood Cinemas suggested I come in after Holy Week to have the full experience and with the US summer blockbusters next in the lineup. I showed up at the cinema offices for a 5-10 p.m. shift on a Saturday. I was met by Jing Valladarez, the theater manager, who gave me a brief background on the cinema, while Claire Sarcia gave me a crash course on the different tasks of the theater personnel. She gave me papers to review which included the orientation module, policies and procedures for cinema porters and courtesy spiels of Eastwood Cinemas.

It was the weekend when "Silent Hill" (horror), "The Sentinel" (suspense), "The Wild" (animation) and "When a Stranger Calls" (thriller) were being shown, so imagine the mix of moviegoers coming in.

Selling tickets was easy: Greet the customer, click on the chosen film and desired seat, confirm transaction, print and hand the tickets plus change. But since there were a lot of customers that day and I did not want to handle money at first, I opted to stay at the counter of the Eastwood Cinema Club VIP lane.

I was able to make transactions with a few cardholders but mostly I politely directed non-cardholders to the other counters. I also answered questions such as "What time is the next showing" and "*May* tickets *na ba para sa* 'Da Vinci Code?'"

Before I knew it, my shift was over. After rereading the policies, I gave myself a poor rating for my first stint since I was not in the proper dress code and discreetly texted, chewed on gummy bears and chatted with some familiar faces while on the job. I asked the managers if I could come back the following Sunday for a longer shift and to try out other jobs in the cinema, and they agreed.

Second weekend

I chose Sunday for the family crowd and extended my shift from 1-8 p.m. Peak hours during Sundays is 3-5 p.m. Three theaters were showing "Mission Impossible III" and the last one was showing "Aquamarine." First task of my day: selling tickets. Then I was led to Cinema 1 for the next task: porter.

The porter is the person at the entrance of the cinema. The job is to greet the customer (courtesy spiels!), receive, check and tear the smaller portion of the ticket, count the tickets using the numbers of the manual ticket and jot it down on the porter's report form. It is also the porter's duty to check the bags of customers and make sure balloons, ice cream in cones, cameras and pets are not allowed inside the theater. And it's also their duty to strictly implement the MTRCB ratings—meaning no kids to R-rated flicks, for instance.

The challenging thing about this job was not only fighting boredom during the dead hours but being on your feet for so long since there were no seats at the porter's area. Counting the tickets was also tedious, taking up nearly an hour.

After lunch, my next task was to usher customers to their seats. Armed with a flashlight, I thought this was the best since all I had to do was bring them to their seats and watch some trailers on the side. But, turned out Eastwood cinemas had stadium-style seating, so I constantly had to go up and down the stairs. I despise the StairMaster at the gym, so this was my punishment for always resetting the timer while my trainer was not looking.

After a couple of customers, I was out of breath and sweating inside the chilly theater. "Hats off to you, Garduce," I thought as I was chugging some juice outside the cinema. I decided to go back to my beloved VIP lane counter to rest and try to make transactions.

Bad decision

Near the end of the day, I was able to make transactions (without loss or short-

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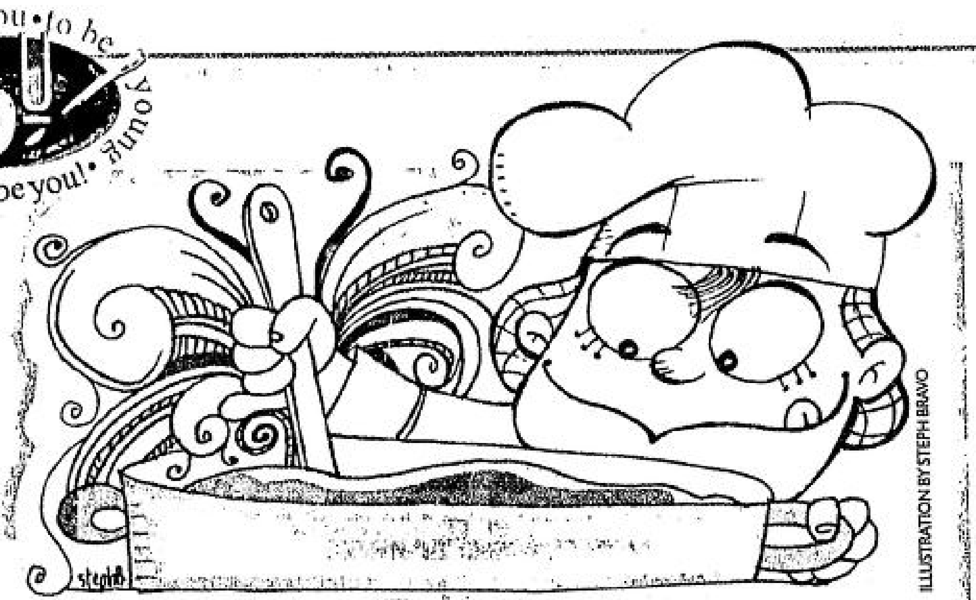
ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Chocolate girl

By April Martinez
2bU! Contributor

AFTER GRADUATING FROM MY course at the Center for Culinary Arts Manila, I immediately started my apprenticeship in Westin Philippine Plaza.

Being an apprentice proved to be a learning experience for me. I was assigned to mass production, baking batches of cookies and pastries. It was a whole new world for me: meeting and dealing with all sorts of personalities, mastering recipes and learning the value of working quickly yet efficiently.

At present, I am a casual assigned to the chocolate room. Chef Lito has taught me everything about chocolates and I've really learned a lot. Handling chocolate isn't that simple. One has to melt the chocolate in the right temperature or else it won't come out as expected. Therefore, you really need to learn to be patient. Patience is especially useful when making garnishes for the desserts, because the decorations used are very delicate.

I also learned that finishing the job quickly won't guarantee the quality of the products. Rushing usually breaks the intricate decorations, entailing repetition all over again. From job to life, that's a good lesson to learn.

Loyola Artists Guild concert

THE LOYOLA ARTISTS GUILD PRESENTS May Day Eve, a musical event for the benefit of the Fine Arts Festival 2007, on May 26, 8 p.m., at Party Central, 141 Mother Ignacia St., South Triangle, QC.

The event is spearheaded by the Creative Writing, Theater Arts, Information Design, and Arts Management students of Ateneo de Manila. Featured Artists include Cynthia Alexander, Cambio, Out of Body Special, Whatevuritakes, Taggu Ndios, and Empty Siren Boulevard.

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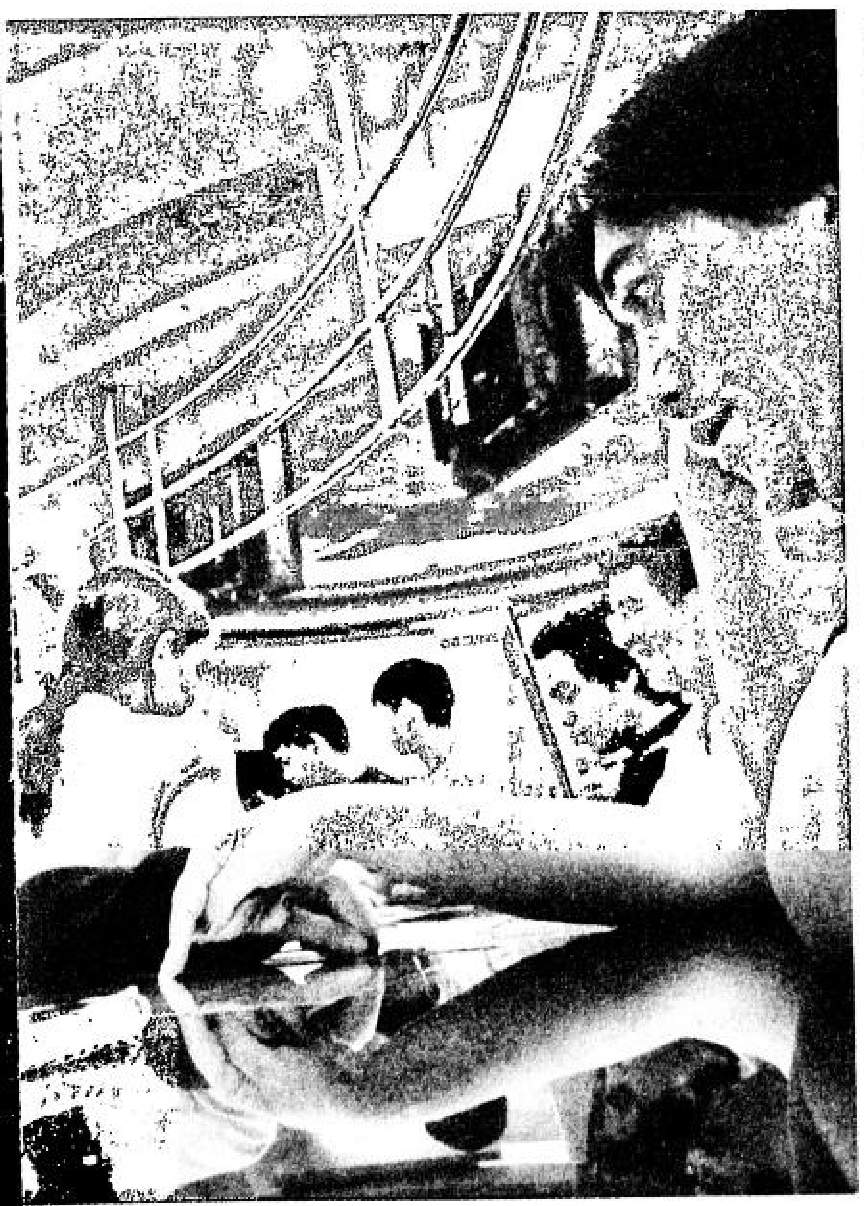

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n I decided to take some non- lers in my lane. Bad decision, ne to know what it really felt like the other side of the counter. rs of taking my time choosing a throwing bitchfits when it took e clerk to give my change finally enge.

wful whenever customers didn't you" no matter how accommo- polite I was. I wanted to punch some rowdy moviegoers on the face when they couldn't decide whether to sit up front or sit at the back (I later suggested it's better to sit at the back since the action scenes might make them puke).

After two days of working, I was rewarded with a trip inside the projection room. That proved to be the highlight of my experience.

With my experience in Eastwood cinemas, not only did I learn about the job, but also some things about myself. As a student of management, I subscribe to the belief that "the customer is king," but I realize we customers should also know basic courtesy and learn to practice patience.

So next time you plan to watch a movie, always say "thank you," blame yourself if you don't get a good seat and be a little tidy with your movie snacks.

Eastwood Cinemas is located at 4/L, Eastwood City Walk 2. For inquiries, text CTC MOV EASTWOOD to 2333 for Globe and 225 for Smart. To join the Eastwood Cinema Club: Cinema Loyalty and Privilege program, contact 6876770-74.

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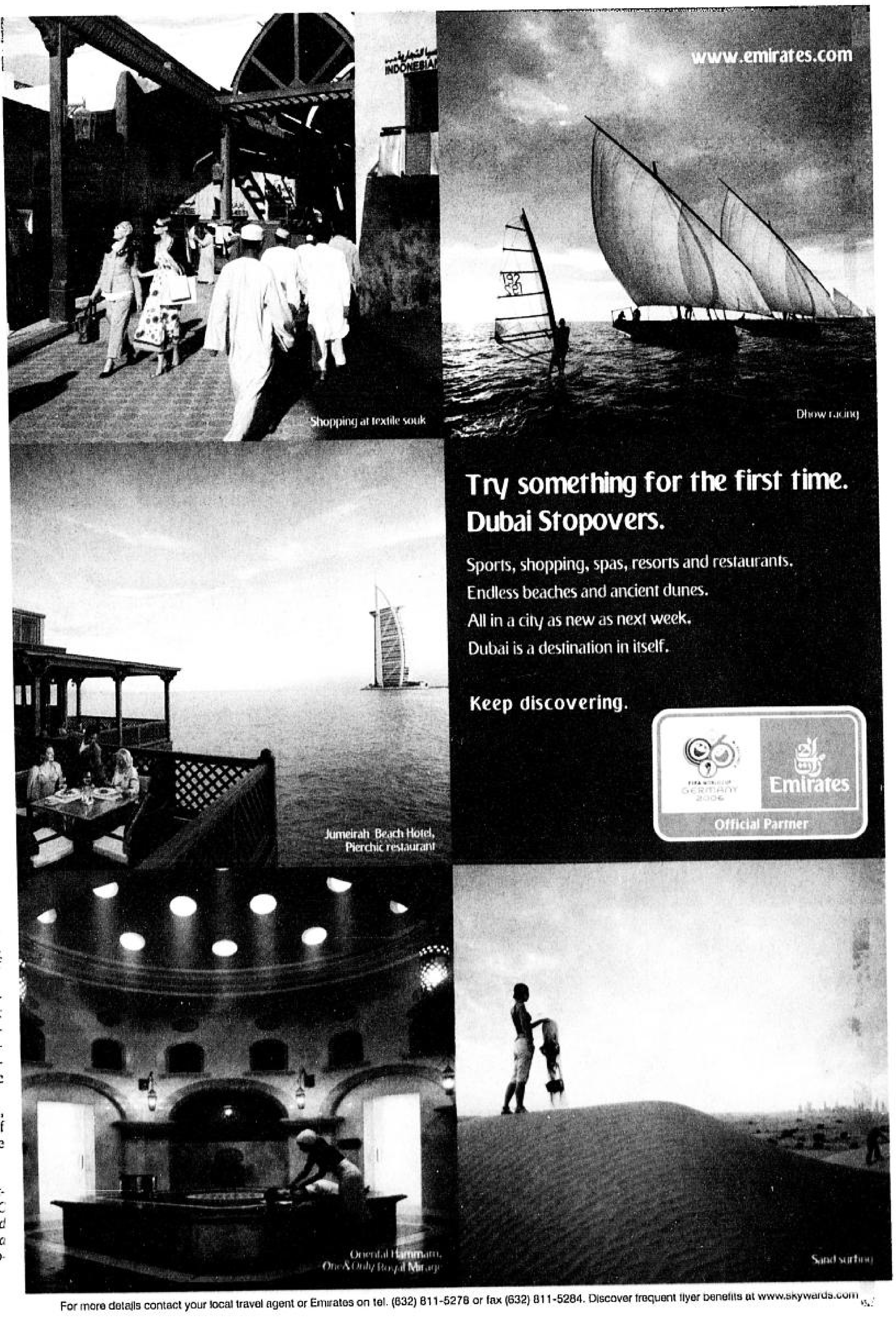
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1. What will Taylor Hicks' first song be?
2. Who will be the second "American Idol" contestant to perform?
3. Who do you think will be eliminated this week?

E-mail your answers to starworldamericanidol_on_2bu@yahoo.com with your complete name and contact details and get the chance to win limited American Idol radio shower kit and CD holder!

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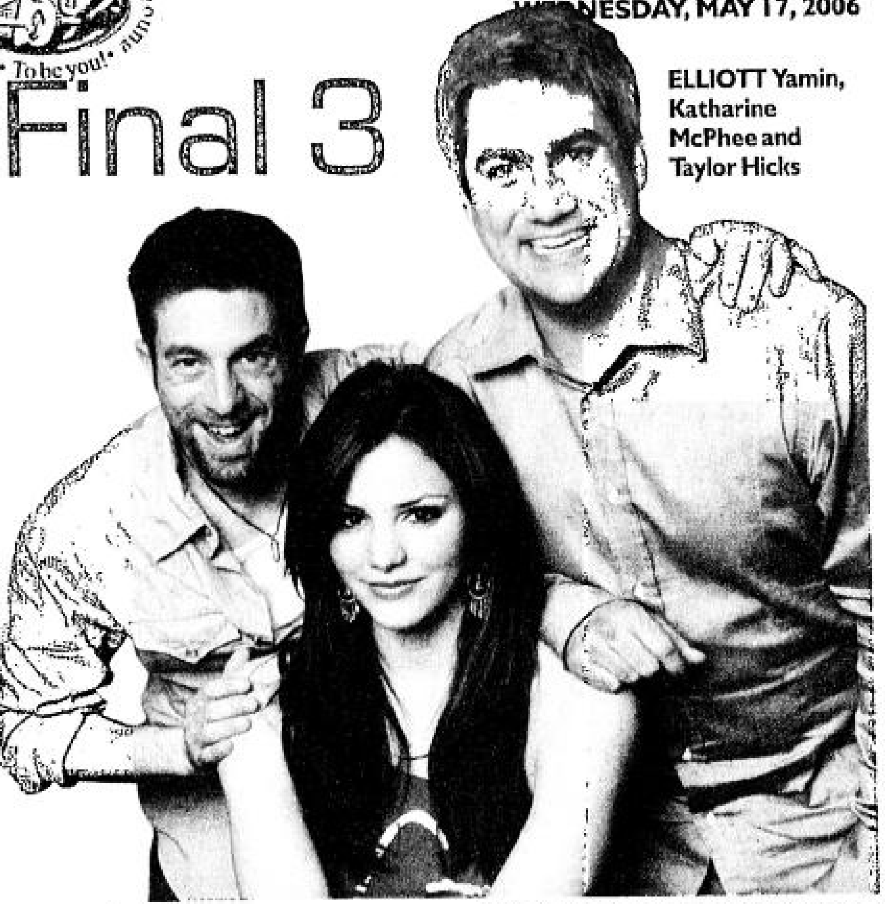
'American Idol' Final 3



ELLIOTT Yamin, Katharine McPhee and Taylor Hicks

VIEWERS HAVE VOTED, AND THREE contestants remain in the toughest, final leg of the competition. Who among Taylor Hicks, Katharine McPhee and Elliott Yamin will become the next American Idol? Here's more about this season's Final 3.

Tune in to American Idol season 5 on StarWorld, direct via satellite every Wednesday and Thursday, 5 p.m., with replays at 8 and 11:30 p.m. Don't miss the excitement of the grand finals on May 24 and 25, only on Star World!

Taylor Hicks

Age: 29

Hometown: Birmingham, AL

Audition city: Las Vegas

Favorite female artist: Cyndi Lauper

Favorite male artist: Billy Joel, Van Morrison, Bob Seger

When did you first start to sing? When I started to crawl.

Do you have any formal singing training? No.

What other talents do you have? This is it.

If you don't make it on "American Idol," what will you do? Broke performer

What album would your friends be surprised you own? "The Wiggles"

Who is your American Idol? Ray Charles

What is your definition of an American Idol? Someone very talented and humble.

Who is your favorite judge and why? Randy—he plays an instrument.

Katharine McPhee

Age: 22

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Audition city: San Francisco

Favorite female artist: Whitney

Favorite male artist: Brian McKnight

When did you first start to sing? 2 years old

Do you have any formal singing training? Just in college and on and off with my mother.

What other talents do you have? Acting and dancing

If you don't make it on "American Idol," what will you do? Go back to acting and dancing, musicals.

What album would your friends be surprised you own? Cirque du Soleil

Who is your American Idol? Gene Kelly

What is your definition of an American Idol? A positive influence on the world who can move people through his or her artistry

Who is your favorite judge and why? Simon—he is honest.

Elliott Yamin

Age: 27

Hometown: Richmond, VA

Audition city: Boston

Favorite female artist: Alicia Keys, Gwen Stefani

Favorite male artist: Usher

When did you first start to sing? 5 years old.

Do you have any formal singing training? No.

What other talents do you have? I can do funny voices and impressions.

If you don't make it on "American Idol," what will you do? Do whatever I've always done... Survive! Of course, I'd still pursue a career in music.

What are your personal goals in life? To help educate young people about music and diabetes. I want to be an inspiration to others. I want to be a great dad someday. I want to meet Magic Johnson and have a floor seat at a Lakers game.

What is your definition of an American Idol? Someone who can inspire others to accomplish anything they set their mind to do

Who is your favorite judge and why? Simon—he doesn't sugarcoat anything.

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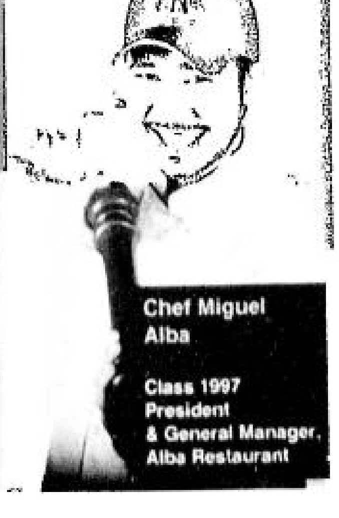


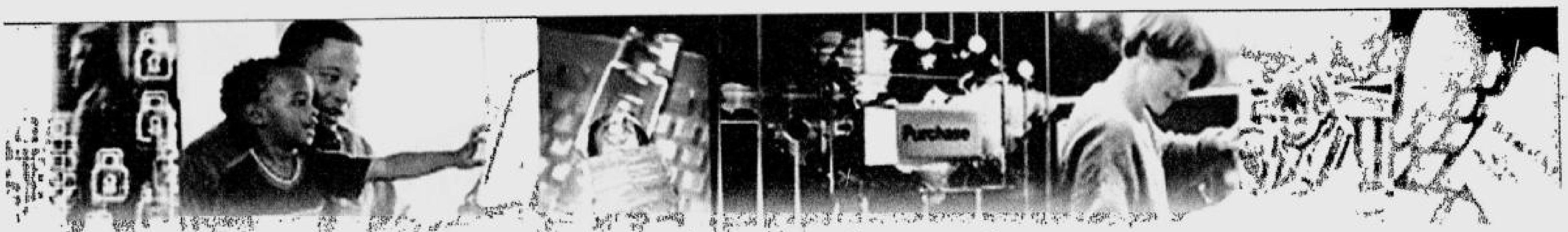
Chef Miguel Alba

Class 1997
President
& General Manager,
Alba Restaurant

E-mail: sprojects@inquirer.com.ph

World Telecommunication Day

Editor **Aries Espinosa**



Promoting Global Cybersecurity

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION DAY (WTD) commemorates the founding of ITU on 17 May 1865. This year, WTD carries added significance as 17 May has been identified by the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society as "World Information Society Day".

In today's interconnected and increasingly networked world, societies are vulnerable to a wide variety of threats, including deliberate attacks on critical information infrastructures with debilitating effects on our economies and on our societies. In order to safeguard our systems and infrastructure and in order to instill confidence in online trade, commerce, banking, telemedicine, e-government and a host of other applications, we need to strengthen our collective global cybersecurity. As this depends on the security practices of each and every networked country, business, and citizen, we need to develop a global culture of cybersecurity.

This is why, the ITU Council chose to highlight the serious challenges we face in ensuring the safety and security of networked information and communication systems and adopted the theme Promoting Global Cybersecurity for World Telecommunication Day 2006.

Nokia introduces the Nokia N91 for a true mobile music experience

STORAGE FOR UP TO 3000 SONGS, plus smartphone functionality in an ultra-portable package

Manila, Philippines - Nokia recently introduced the Nokia N91 multimedia, the company's latest device optimized for mobile music consumption. With room for up to 3000 songs on the integrated 4-gigabyte hard disk, the Nokia N91 delivers a premier music experience.

In addition, the industry standard 3.5mm stereo headset jack and easy transfer of music files from your PC help make the Nokia N91 a connected mobile jukebox. Encased in stainless steel, the Nokia N91 has dedicated music keys on its face, which slide down to reveal the phone keypad. The Nokia N91 is a part of the new Nokia Nseries range, bringing you the latest multimedia technologies and smartphone functionalities. "The Nokia N91 delivers both a fantastic music experience and cutting-edge phone features," said Parikshit Bhasin, Country General Manager, Nokia Philippines. "What sets the Nokia N91 apart is the fact that it is always connected - you can download new music while on the move, add it to your favorite playlist and then share your playlist with friends. It's truly the world's best mobile connected jukebox."

Listen to Music

The Nokia N91 serves up to 12.5 hours of great sound via the included stereo headset with remote control. Enjoying your music collection has never been easier, as the Nokia N91 supports a wide range of digital music formats including MP3, M4A, AAC and WMA.

Nokia N91 is compatible with a number of accessories from industry leading brands Bose(R), Harman Kardon(r), JBL(r), and Sennheiser. In addition to using their favorite audio accessories with the Nokia N91 through its standard 3.5mm jack, consumers can maximize their audio experience by choosing products from a line-up of Nokia tested and recommended audio accessories.

Get Music

Packed with multiple connectivity options, such as WCDMA, WLAN and Bluetooth wireless technology, the Nokia N91 makes it easy for you to find and enjoy music when and where you want. With the Nokia N91, you can quickly and easily find and purchase music over the air to your device from your operator's music store.

Manage Music

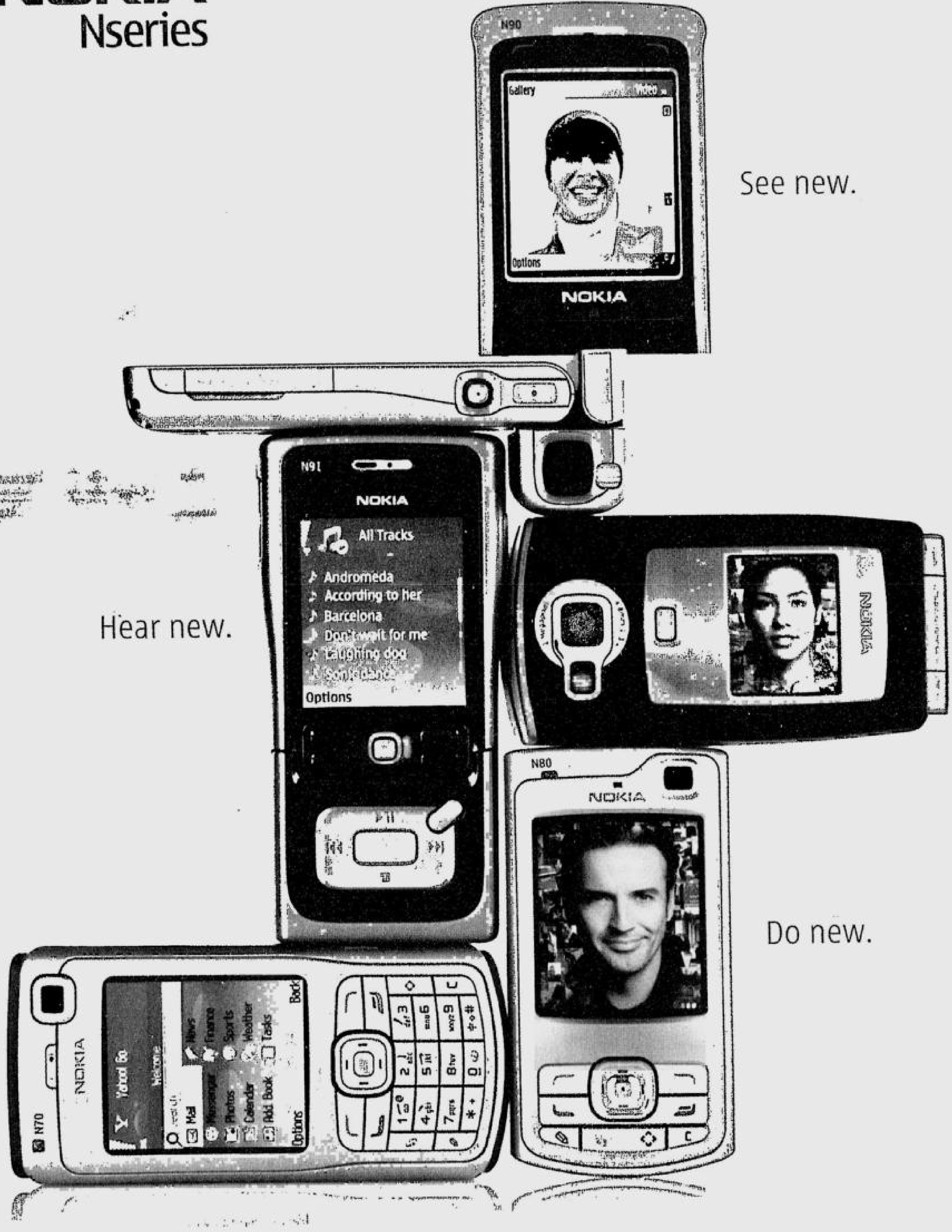
Drag and drop your personal music collection from your PC to your Nokia N91 or synchronize your recent music purchases with your PC via USB 2.0. You can also create and manage your playlists directly on your Nokia N91, or shuffle songs around to build your optimal listening experience.

Share Music

A revolutionary feature of the Nokia N91 is the possibility to share your playlists with friends by multimedia message, email or Bluetooth. Proudly show off your musical taste or simply share the latest songs that have been stuck in your head. The Nokia N91 also contains the latest multimedia technologies and smartphone functionalities, including a 2 megapixel camera for print-quality photos, email support, a full web browser and video sharing.

NOKIA
Connecting People

NOKIA
Nseries



Enjoy 3G with the highly-acclaimed Nseries multimedia computers – Nokia N70, N71, N80, N90, and N91.

Experience video calls, MP3 downloads, high-resolution streaming and internet browsing at remarkably high speed. With all these winning features, there is hardly any doubt why Nokia leads the way in 3G.

Nokia N70
"Editors' Choice Award"
CNET Asia

Nokia N80
"Best Mobile Imaging Device in Europe 2006"
-Technical Image Press Association

Nokia N90
"European Media Phone of the Year 2005-2006"
-European Imaging and Sound Association

Nokia N91
"Mobile Innovation Awards 2005"
-Laptop Magazine

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Messages

The annual observance of World Telecommunication Day, marking the founding of the International Telecommunication Union on 17 May 1865, has drawn attention to the work of ITU and the broader challenges of global communication. From the days of the telegraph through space-age communication, and now in cyberspace, ITU has helped to connect the world.

In recognition of this evolution, the World Summit on the Information Society, which was held in two phases (in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005), proposed that 17 May henceforth be celebrated as World Information Society Day. The Summit's aim was to build an open, inclusive, people-centred, knowledge-based information society that will accelerate the pace of development. This occasion now highlights the link between the great potential of information and communication technologies and our goal of accelerating the pace of development.

The Summit recognized the importance of building confidence and trust in the use of ICTs. This is reflected in the theme for this year's observance, promoting global cybersecurity. In an increasingly interconnected and networked world, it has become critically important to safeguard our vital systems and infrastructures against attack by cybercriminals, while instilling confidence in online transactions in order to promote trade, commerce, banking, telemedicine, e-government and a host of other e-applications. As this depends on the security practices of each and every networked country, business and citizen, we need to develop a global culture of cybersecurity.

I therefore urge all Member States and stakeholders to help increase global awareness of cybersecurity, and to develop an international network of initiatives and ICT-based countermeasures to enhance security and build trust in the use of information and communication technologies. This is essential for the continued growth and development of our economies, and especially important for developing countries.

More broadly, on this annual observance, let us all pledge to connect the unconnected and build a free and safe information society that will spur development for all the world s people.

KOFI A. ANNAN (*Sgd.*)
Secretary-General
United Nations

Dear Friends, World Telecommunication Day commemorates the inception of the oldest international organization in history. This 17 May 2006, on its 141st anniversary, ITU finds itself on the threshold of a new era.

During the past seven years, ITU has guided the landmark World Summit on the Information Society to its historic conclusion. World leaders gathered in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005 to provide political backing for a road map aimed at developing and utilizing information and communication technologies in the service of humanity.

In the process, ITU's standing in the world as the lead agency in telecommunications and ICT has been clearly established. ITU has expanded its base, having pioneered the involvement of all stakeholders in the process. Governments, technological experts, social scientists, business and civil society leaders, international organizations and grassroots workers - have all been deeply engaged in laying the foundations of a more just, equitable and people-centred Information Society.

ITU has also grown in stature, having taken far-reaching steps in using its recognized expertise to reach out to the remotest regions of the globe, to the most vulnerable people, and help accelerate the pace of development. ITU has already forged partnerships with some of the greatest visionaries in government, business, civil society and international organizations aimed at connecting the unconnected through its Connect the World initiative, launched in June 2005.

This year, ITU has advocated the development of ICT to assist the disabled and to prepare for emergencies and disasters. And to ensure that the growth of ICT remains sustainable, the theme for World Telecommunication Day 2006 is Promoting Global Cybersecurity. In an increasingly networked society, safeguarding cyberspace as well as ICT systems and infrastructure has taken on real urgency. It is essential to instill confidence in online trade, commerce, banking, telemedicine, e-government and a host of other applications. It is also critical for the future social and economic development of the world.

Achieving cybersecurity depends on the security practices of each and every networked country, business, and citizen. To guard against the sophisticated skills of cybercriminals, we need to develop a global culture of cybersecurity. This will require not only good policing and legislation but also acute threat awareness and development of tough ICT-based countermeasures.

From the days of the telegraph, ITU has mastered space age communications and continues to develop its expertise in cyberspace. It now takes on the additional mantle of leading the global movement to build the Information Society. World leaders meeting at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in November 2005 recognized this evolution of ITU and proposed that 17 May - World Telecommunication Day - should henceforth be celebrated as World Information Society Day.

ITU accepts this honour - and the challenge - to open another chapter in its chequered history and embark on a new journey. As we commemorate this important landmark, let us all together celebrate this first World Information Society Day!

YOSHIO UTSUMI
Secretary-General
International Telecommunication Union

World celebrates May 17, 2006 as the First World Information Society Day

ITU World Information Society Award presented to President Wade of Senegal and Professor Yunus of Bangladesh

GENEVA, 9 MAY 2006 - THE FIRST WORLD Information Society Day will be commemorated on 17 May 2006 to mark the inception of the International Telecommunication Union in 1865, over 140 years ago. This day, May 17, has been marked for many years now as World Telecommunication Day.

On this important occasion, the first ITU World Information Society Award will be presented to two distinguished and eminent personalities whose outstanding personal contributions have furthered the cause of building a more inclusive and equitable Information Society and helped close the digital divide. The inaugural ITU Award will be given to President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Professor Muhammad Yunus, Managing Director of Grameen Bank, Bangladesh.

A cluster of related activities will take place over a 10-day period, 9-19 May. Geneva will be the venue for several significant steps being taken towards implementation and follow-up action on the recently-concluded World Summit on the Information Society. According to the Tunis Agenda, ITU along with UNESCO and UNDP will take the lead to facilitate implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action. As part of the observance of World Information Society Day, moderators and facilitators of action lines, such as UNCTAD, ILO and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs will meet to take the process forward. A second round of informal consultations will also be held on the setting up of the Internet Governance Forum as a follow up to the recommendations of the Summit.

Promoting cybersecurity

On 17 May, as the world observes World Telecommunications Day with the them "Promoting Global Cybersecurity", the ITU will release the results of a worldwide public survey to assess users' trust of online transactions and awareness of cybersecurity measures. The data collected through this survey will be used to increase global awareness of cybersecurity, particularly in developing countries, and will help decision-makers in assessing the cyberspace "trust" level with a view to reviewing national and corporate strategies and priorities. An analysis of the survey will be posted on a new website. The survey will continue beyond World Information Society Day to elicit further information on these critical issues.

According to ITU Secretary-General Yoshio Utsumi, "Achieving cybersecurity depends on the security practices of each and every networked country, business, and citizen. To guard against the sophisticated skills of cybercriminals, we need to develop a global culture of cybersecurity. This will require not only good policing and legislation but also acute threat awareness and development of tough ICT-based countermeasures."

ITU will also launch a Cybersecurity gateway that will serve as an easy-to-use information resource on national and international cybersecurity-related initiatives and websites worldwide, while promoting, developing and implementing a global culture of cybersecurity.

About World Information Society Day

In recognition of ITU as the UN agency specializing in helping the world communicate in the age of cyberspace, the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis, November 2005, called upon the United Nations to declare 17 May, which now marks World Telecommunication Day, as World Information Society Day. Endorsed by the UN General Assembly, this observance takes into account the realities of the new millennium where information and communication, aided by the digital revolution, can and must be made available to all to build a people-centred and knowledge-based Information Society that will help accelerate the pace of development. The intention of commemorating World Information Society Day is to focus global attention annually on reaching the enormous benefits of the digital revolution in information and communication technologies to all humanity.

About ITU

ITU is the leading United Nations agency for information and communication technology issues, and the global focal point for governments and the private sector in developing networks and services. For more than 140 years, ITU has coordinated shared global use of the radio spectrum, promoted international cooperation in assigning satellite orbits, worked to improve telecommunication infrastructure in the developing world, and established the worldwide standards that assure seamless interconnection of a vast range of communications systems.

ITU also organizes worldwide and regional exhibitions and forums bringing together the most influential representatives of government and the telecommunications industry to exchange ideas, knowledge and technology for the benefit of the global community, and in particular the developing world.

From broadband Internet to latest-generation wireless technologies, from aeronautical and maritime navigation to radio astronomy and satellite-based meteorology, from phone and fax services to TV broadcasting and next-generation networks, ITU continues to play a central role in helping the world communicate.

ITU World Information Society Award

His Excellency
Mr. Abdoulaye Wade
President
Republic of Senegal

For his outstanding personal contribution towards building a global information Society for the benefit of all.

Abdoulaye Wade, Senegalese lawyer and statesman, has been the President of the Republic of Senegal since April 1, 2000.

As one of the main promoters of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and particularly as the coordinator of the ICT sector, President Wade has spoken out actively for Africa and the Information Society.

Throughout the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process he vigorously championed the concept of digital solidarity and emphasized the potential that information and communication technologies harbor for development, with the desire that WSIS might lead to a true dialogue on the subject.

The principle of digital solidarity has been embodied in Paragraph 61 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles, which invites "all stakeholders to commit to the Digital Solidarity Agenda" set forth in the Geneva Plan of Action.

An optimist and visionary, President Wade has walked assiduously to make the concept of digital solidarity a reality through the creation of the Digital Solidarity Fund, a new voluntary funding mechanisms aimed at supporting local development projects.

The Digital Solidarity Fund was inaugurated in Geneva in April 2005, and was welcomed by the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005) as well as by the Millennium Summit meeting in New York in September 2005.

Professor Muhammad Yunus
Managing Director
Grameen Bank, Bangladesh

For his outstanding personal contribution towards building a global Information Society for the benefit of all.

Professor Muhammad Yunus' innovative approach to poverty alleviation in Bangladesh has inspired the global microcredit movement reaching out to millions of poor women.

A noted economist, Professor Muhammad Yunus started the Grammen Bank Project in 1976. today, Grameen Bank provides collateral-free loans to 5 million clients in Bangladesh, of which 96 percent are women. Overall, the last two decades, Grameen Bank has loaned over 5 billion dollars to the poorest of the poor, while maintaining a repayment rate consistently above 98 percent.

Besides Grameen Bank Prof. Yunus has created a number of companies in Bangladesh to address diverse issues of poverty and development. Among the companies are Grameen Phone (a mobile telephone company), Grameen Cybernet (Internet Service Provider), Grameen Communications (Rural Internet Service Provider), Grameen Software company and Grameen Information Technology Park.

The Grameen Phone (Village Phone) program, through which women entrepreneurs can start a business providing wireless payphone service in rural areas of Bangladesh, has become a legendary success. In doing so, Grameen created a new class of women entrepreneurs who have raised themselves from poverty. Moreover, it improved the livelihoods of farmers and others who were provided access to critical market information and lifeline communications previously unattainable in some 28,000 villages of Bangladesh. More than 55,000 phones are currently in operation, with more than 80 million people benefiting from access to ICTs.

About the ITU World Information Society Award

The ITU World Information Society Award has been created to honor individuals or institutions that made a significant contribution to promoting, building or strengthening a people-centered, development-oriented and knowledge-based Information Society. Achievement may take the term of social accomplishment, mobilization of public opinion, or a key technical innovation. The ITU World Information Society Award is presented on May 17, World Information Society Day, which is also World Telecommunication Day, commemorating the founding of ITU in 1865.

A smooth evolution to 3G and All IP with Ericsson

Operators today are finding that they have to change the way they run their businesses in order to maintain their competitiveness and ensure continued revenue growth against the backdrop of intense competition and a saturating market. As Average-Revenue-Per-User (ARPU) declines, operators seek to increase usage by differentiating service offerings to capture and maintain the high-end or targeted segments

As such, they need a partner that will help them utilize new technologies and tap into the full potential of new, multimedia services. On top of the agenda is making a success of 3G (WCDMA/HSDPA and beyond), as well as evolving to all-IP in order to deliver enriched users experiences in the most cost-effective manner. For later entrants, innovative business models and go-to-market strategies are key in gaining a competitive edge over traditional and established players. With converging technologies, operators are also looking at high-performance broadband networks to enable a multi-service environment for Triple Play, as well as maximizing the potential for fixed-mobile convergence.

Within such a challenging and evolving telecommunications landscape, operators are relying more and more on strategic partnerships in order to remain competitive, not just for now, but for the future. Over the years, Ericsson, too, has had to evolve from being a traditional infrastructure vendor, to being a true end-to-end solutions provider.

In an exclusive interview with the Philippine Daily Enquirer, Ericsson President & Country Manager, Rajendra Pangrekar, shares how Ericsson has made this transition and is now poised to help its customers ride the evolution and remain ahead of its competitors.

End-to-end solutions

"Our customers rely on our capability to provide complete telecommunications systems and make everything work together. We do this by providing everything from infrastructure and applications, to services, core handset technology and handsets," says Pangrekar.

He also says that Ericsson's competitive end-to-end solutions also puts us it in a strong position in the growing market for converged networks, adding that the recent acquisition of Marconi strengthens Ericsson's overall capabilities to provide end-to-end next-generation network solutions all the way from design to rollout and professional services.

Pangrekar attributes Ericsson's success in offering an end-to-end portfolio to a few key factors.

"At Ericsson, one of our top priorities is to understand the end-user needs. Through the Ericsson Consumer and Enterprise Lab, as well as our Business Consulting Unit, we focus on understanding operator, enterprise and consumer needs in different markets. We work with many operators to develop their business models and find new consumer and enterprise services which are easy to use, regardless of the enabling technology," he adds.

Pangrekar also points out that Ericsson's customers benefit from its global experiences, learnings and best practices that is gained from operator experiences in more than 140 countries worldwide.

Last, but not least, Ericsson has the industry's strongest R&D commitment, with 20,000 granted patents worldwide. It is also the undisputed leader in UMTS/WCDMA patents.

Making a success of 3G and beyond

According to Pangrekar, there are three critical success factors in making WCDMA and HSDPA a success: Having a high quality, high performance network, the right go-to-market strategy and launch plan, and the fast launch of new revenue-generating services with compelling content & innovative pricing that will provide returns on investments.

"3G is a complex technology and we are the undisputed leader in this area, being a prime supplier to 50 of the 96 commercially launched WCDMA networks worldwide. Furthermore, over half of all WCDMA launches in 2005 were powered by Ericsson," says Pangrekar.

Another major challenge, he says, is for operators to ensure a smooth integration from 2G to 3G, and this is where Ericsson's expertise and experience working with many other operators in Europe, Asia and the Americas, come into play.

"There is nothing worse than to have delays in the commercial launch or launching a network with 2G-3G handover problems and a poor quality network, as the customer's first experience with 3G will have a big impact on whether or not he continues to use it. We have worked with such problems in a various situations in many other countries before, and we have the expertise to bridge the challenges of seamless network evolution," he adds.

Ericsson is the world leader in designing, building and optimizing mobile networks. Its 21,000 service professionals located all around the globe provide 24/7 support of networks with more than 700 million subscribers. Over the past two decades, Ericsson has deployed turnkey networks for more than 275 customers in 140 countries. It also has more than 10 years of experience in multi-vendor integration projects for 120 operators worldwide.

Where 3G is concerned, Pangrekar says that Ericsson has 65 network tuning, design, strategy or security projects completed or ongoing, almost half of which employ Ericsson's world-leading expertise in WCDMA radio access network tuning."

Pangrekar also reveals that due to Ericsson's extensive experience with 3G networks, more and more customers are relying on Ericsson to take on the operational risk by operating the network and utilizing synergies within Ericsson's global service delivery organization.

"This will allow out customers to focus on the front-end of the business, securing existing revenue and creating new revenue streams, customer acquisition and retention," he explains, adding that Ericsson has the strongest track record in Managed Services, ranging from establishing, operating and managing the day-to-day operations of a customer's network, to hosting content, applications and enablers.

"In all Managed Services contracts (excluding hosting), we are managing networks that, together, serve more than 58 million subscribers worldwide. Since 2002, we have officially announced more than 80 Managed Services contracts," he adds.

In Asia, some of the more recent Managed Services (Operations) contracts include Bharti-Tele Ventures in India, Warid Telecom in Pakistan and Maxis in Malaysia. Among 3G Managed Services contracts include 3UK, Hutch Italy, Hutch Hong Kong, Maxis Malaysia, PT Natrindo Indonesia, Vodafone Netherlands, and many more.

Apart from Managed Operations, Pangrekar points out that Ericsson understands the operators' need to provide the right services at the right time.

"We are in a unique position to be a one-stop partner to operators with a full end-to-end portfolio to ensure a fast service launch. Apart from our Consumer and Enterprise Labs and Business Consulting, we also work with Content and Applications through the Ericsson Mobility World, and offer a complete network solution from Access Layer to Service Layer, as well as Systems Integration. With Hosting, the service will be integrated, hosted and managed by Ericsson, and we will take on the overall responsibility for the service, including Digital Rights Management, content aggregation and platform development," he adds.

Pangrekar says that Ericsson also supports 3G launches through the sharing of its business expertise, primarily via Ericsson Business Consulting. Ericsson has supported many of its customers to develop successful go-to-market strategies and plans that focuses on capturing the right target markets and getting a faster return on investments.

Efficient Evolution to all-IP

Ericsson's understanding of the complexity of third generation mobile technologies extends into the core domain as well, where it leads the telecom industry in the introduction of layered architecture.

"The focus is on building flexible and cost-efficient networks in a way that makes it easy for the operator to start handling new services. Ericsson's approach is to structure a network into independent areas of connectivity, control and services; thereby keeping the core elements apart from one another. In this way, when an operator wants to introduce new services or equipment into one layer it is not necessary to re-engineer the network or replace the hardware. Such design allows operators much more flexibility than with conventional networks, which are designed as monolithic systems from top to bottom," explains. Pangrekar.

Ericsson's mobile softswitch is the first step toward an all-IP core network. By introducing a layered architecture, with centralized operations and a common flexible core network, Ericsson's mobile softswitch ensures a common foundation for new consumer services.

The drive towards convergence of the internet and mobile domains over All-IP systems is another area in which Ericsson is instrumental. The company recognizes the benefits All-IP will bring in terms of service creation, integration and cost savings for both operators and content providers. The technology that will ultimately be used for convergence is called the IP Multimedia Subsystem (IMS) -- a new standard that allows data, speech, fixed and mobile to converge over an IP-based infrastructure -- allowing operators and enterprises to launch IP services quickly while evolving to a converged all-IP environment. Ericsson IMS enables flexible application development and smooth deployment of multiples applications and services. Ericsson has signed 19 IMS system contracts for commercial launch and 40 additional trials.

Broadband everywhere

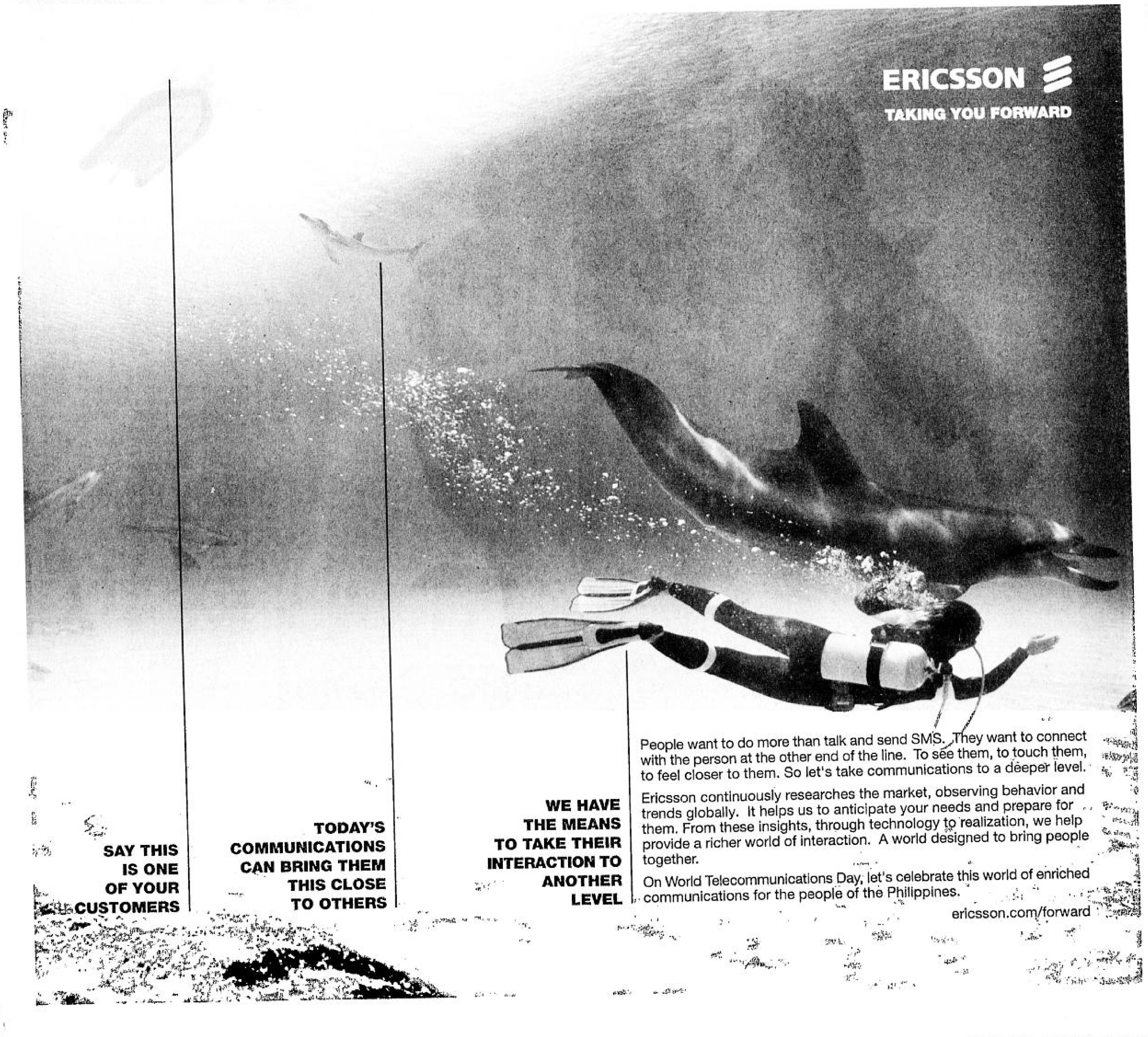
With extremely low broadband penetration levels in most South-East Asian nations, Pangrekar believes that the high speed and extensive coverage enabled by HSDPA (WCDMA-evolved) makes mobile broadband the quickest and the most cost-effective way to boost broadband penetration in the region.

"Leveraging on the existing WCDMA (3G network) or HSDPA mobile network is the best way to expand and provide telecommunication services, including broadband services outside of the urban areas", he adds.

Last year, Ericsson demonstrated the first live High Speed Downlink Packet Access (HSDPA) in South East Asia. "HSDPA represents the first essential step towards making 'Broadband Everywhere' a reality. With HSDPA, mobile phone users will be able to experience data downloads and streaming applications at speeds of up to 11 megabit-per-second (mbps). Translated into consumer usage, this means it will take around 4 seconds to download one minute of audio, 1.9 seconds to download a 200kB Power Point slideshow, and 1 second to download a 30kB JPEG image," says Mr. Pangrekar.

Ericsson has the industry's strongest roadmap in WCDMA evolution, presently powering around 30 HSDPA networks around the world, with commercial launches in seven countries.

In the Philippines, Ericsson began its operations in 1988 and today is a leading provider of fixed and mobile solutions to the country's telecommunications operators. Based in Pasig City, the company employs close to 200 local employees.


ERICSSON
TAKING YOU FORWARD
SAY THIS IS ONE OF YOUR CUSTOMERS
TODAY'S COMMUNICATIONS CAN BRING THEM THIS CLOSE TO OTHERS
WE HAVE THE MEANS TO TAKE THEIR INTERACTION TO ANOTHER LEVEL

People want to do more than talk and send SMS. They want to connect with the person at the other end of the line. To see them, to touch them, to feel closer to them. So let's take communications to a deeper level.

Ericsson continuously researches the market, observing behavior and trends globally. It helps us to anticipate your needs and prepare for them. From these insights, through technology to realization, we help provide a richer world of interaction. A world designed to bring people together.

On World Telecommunications Day, let's celebrate this world of enriched communications for the people of the Philippines.

ericsson.com/forward

Biography of NTC Commissioner Ronald Olivar Solis

COMMISSIONER RONALD OLIVAR Solis is the Commissioner of the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC). He was appointed to this position by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on January, 2004. Before being named to lead the NTC, he was a Senior Partner of the Solis and Medina Law Office from 1995 to January 2004. He was also a Law Professor of the Philippine Law School and was with the faculty of the college from 1999-2003. He also. served with distinction as one of the volunteer private prosecutors in the celebrated impeachment trial of then President Joseph Ejercito Estrada. He honed his legal expertise as a senior partner of the Victoriano, Solis, Medina and Magno Law Offices from 1993 to 1995. Prior to that, he was a Junior Partner in the law office of Medel, Macom, del Rosario and Collado from 1992 to 1993.

He then served as the Senior Associate of the Cuevas, dela Cuesta, and de las Alas Law Office from 1988 to 1992. He was named Outstanding Club President, Rotary International District 3800, RY 2001 - 2002. He is also an outstanding member of numerous professional, socio-civic action groups and other affiliations.

As a lawyer, his principal areas of practice are Criminal, Civil and Administrative Litigations, that include among others, Telecommunications Practice, Corporate Recovery and Rehabilitation Cases, Corporate Disputes, Immigration Proceedings and Labor Law.

Commissioner Solis has attended innumerable conferences and seminars held in almost all parts of the world. Young and energetic at 44 years, the very affable NTC Commissioner is presently residing at Cotton Woods Heights, Antipolo City, with his lovely wife, Victoria Baterina- Solis of Ilocos Sur and Baguio City with their three precocious children: Jesse Pauline, Jose Miguel and Jillian Samantha. Commissioner Solis comes from a prominent family from the province of Antique.

Globelines gives Internet connectivity to Boracay beachgoers

GLOBELINES ALLOWS ITS SUBSCRIBERS to connect to the Internet even while in the beaches of Boracay with Worldpass, its Internet service that allows Internet access anytime, anywhere,

Globelines launched last month the search for the Bora Beach Babe and Hunk wherein beachgoers could post their sexiest swim suit photos at the Globelines website www.globelines.com.ph. Purchase a P100 Worldpass prepaid voucher to get to post that sexiest swim swear shot at the Globelines website and also place a vote on a picture of choice. To be able to vote, buy a P50 Worldpass prepaid voucher from any Globelines Payments and Services Center and dealers nationwide.

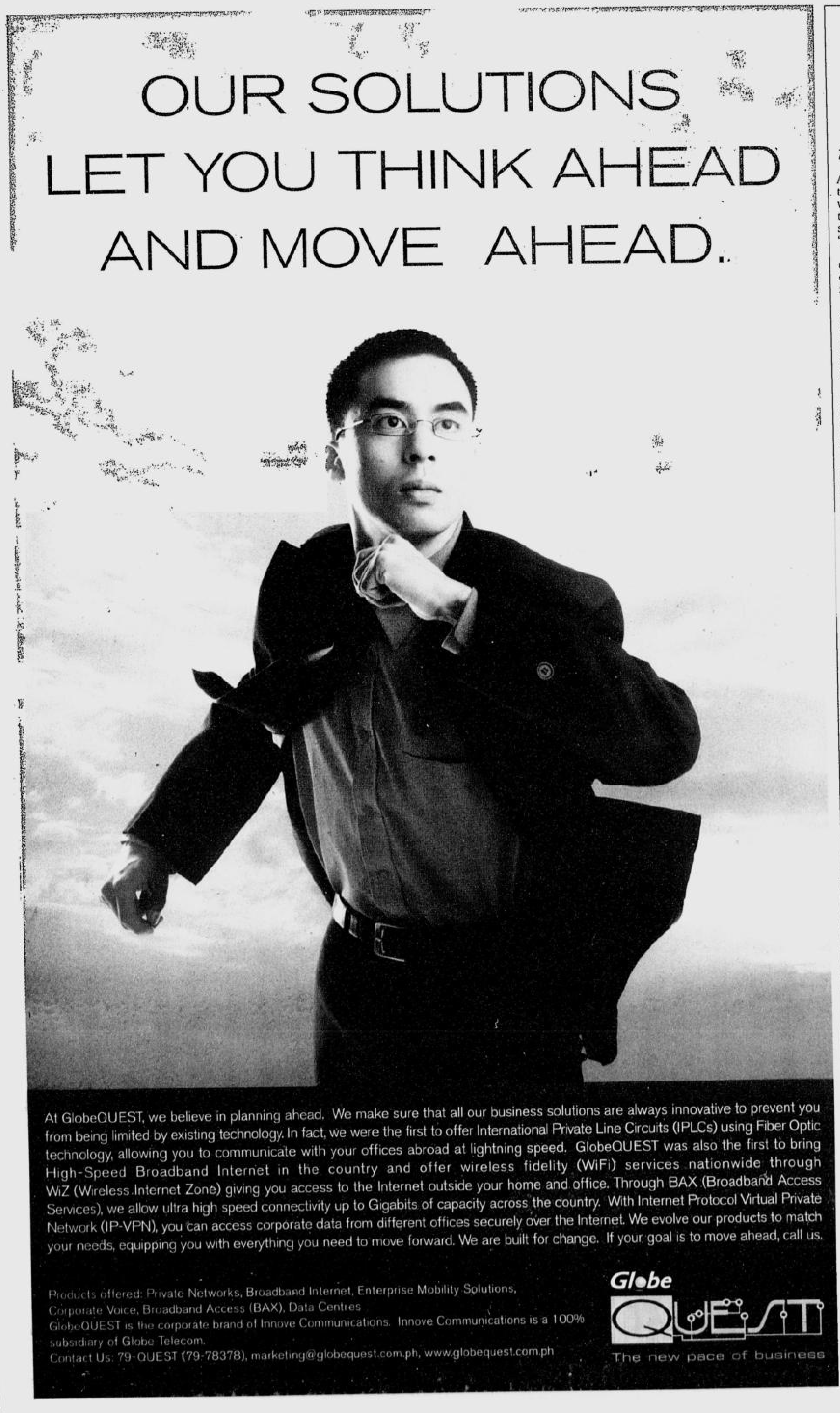
The Bora Beach Babe and Hunk contest will run from April 1 to May 31, 2006. The winners, who will be announced on June 15, 2006, will get an overnight stay for two at the Boracay Regency Beach Resort.

Worldpass is for individuals who are always on the move and require reliable Internet connection wherever they go. With Worldpass, Globelines puts all types of Internet connectivity under one account so subscribers get instant Internet access anywhere and anytime.

Worldpass gives subscribers the flexibility to access the Internet in three ways - via broadband from any Globelines-connected PC, dial-up from any computer using any landline within the country, or Wi-Fi from any GlobeQUEST WiZ hotspot using a Wi-Fi enabled laptop, PDA or mobile phone.

This all-in-one mobile Internet access is being offered as a postpaid account with a low monthly consumable fee of only P250 and in prepaid with vouchers in P20, P50 and P100 denominations.

Worldpass has the following hotel partners in Boracay: Boracay Beach Chalets, Le Soleil de Boracay, Boracay Regency Beach Resort, Red Coconut Beach Hotel and Mango Ray Resort.



At GlobeQUEST, we believe in planning ahead. We make sure that all our business solutions are always innovative to prevent you from being limited by existing technology. In fact, we were the first to offer International Private Line Circuits (IPLCs) using Fiber Optic technology, allowing you to communicate with your offices abroad at lightning speed. GlobeQUEST was also the first to bring High-Speed Broadband Internet in the country and offer wireless fidelity (WiFi) services nationwide through WiZ (Wireless Internet Zone) giving you access to the Internet outside your home and office. Through BAX (Broadband Access Services), we allow ultra high speed connectivity up to Gigabits of capacity across the country. With Internet Protocol Virtual Private Network (IP-VPN), you can access corporate data from different offices securely over the Internet. We evolve our products to match your needs, equipping you with everything you need to move forward. We are built for change. If your goal is to move ahead, call us.

Products offered: Private Networks, Broadband Internet, Enterprise Mobility Solutions, Corporate Voice, Broadband Access (BAX), Data Centres
GlobeQUEST is the corporate brand of Innove Communications. Innove Communications is a 100% subsidiary of Globe Telecom.
Contact Us: 79-QUEST (79-78378), marketing@globequest.com.ph, www.globequest.com.ph

GlobeQUEST WiZ brings superior wireless Internet connectivity to mobile professionals

AS MORE AND MORE PEOPLE BRING their work outside the office, demand for wireless Internet connectivity also begin to grow rapidly. Such need has already spawned the creation of public access "hotspots" that

provide Wi-Fi (Wireless Fidelity) access in locations as diverse as restaurants, coffee shops, airports, hotels, schools, offices, convention centers and malls.

GlobeQUEST, the corporate business group of Innove Communications, thus, takes center stage in supplying the best network solution that will make strategic GlobeQUEST Wireless Internet Zones as workstations for mobile professionals, sales people and other field workers.

So far, GlobeQUEST has already partnered with a number of popular establishments nationwide, providing them with superior managed end-to-end solutions to ensure better flexibility, reliability and accessibility of their Wi-Fi service.

GlobeQUEST WiZ is a new and exciting wireless broadband Internet service using the IEEE 802.11b or Wi-Fi wireless networking standard to provide secure and reliable wireless connectivity to anyone with a Wi-Fi enabled laptop or PDA (personal digital assistant), and thus, allow them to access their email, play online games, surf the Net or even make a call.

A Wi-Fi network can be used to connect computers to each other, to the Internet, and even to wired networks which use 802.3 dubbed as the Ethernet. Wi-Fi networks operate in the unlicensed 2.4GHz and 5GHz radio bands with an 11Mbps (802.11b) or 54Mbps (802.11g) data rate or with products that contain both bands (dual band) so they can provide similar performance equivalent to the basic 10BaseT wired Ethernet networks.

GlobeQUEST's vision is to provide Wi-Fi facilities to major key establishments where people converge for business, as well as promote Wi-Fi as a strategic tool for education, local government projects, product advertisements, and foreign ventures, among others. Given this, GlobeQUEST has expanded to provide coverage not only in Metro Manila but to 13 provinces in the country, namely Cebu, Davao, Bohol, Bacolod, Tacloban, Pampanga, General Santos, Baguio, Olongapo, Cavite, Batangas, Laguna, and Ormoc, making true its commitment to transform the Philippines into a Wi-Fi territory.

GlobeQUEST has also pioneered the "HotZones" which provide WiZ Wi-Fi access to clusters of establishments within the identified zone/sector such as industrial parks, commercial centers, residential subdivisions, mixed-use complex, business districts, and other business communities that require flexibility and productivity. GlobeQUEST WiZ HotZones complement a partnership with the GlobeQUEST WiZ HotSpots with certification from both the establishment and the property management.

GlobeQUEST WiZ can be experienced through Prepaid Plans in P100 (50 minutes), P400 (200 minutes) and P1,000 (500 minutes) denominations; or through GlobeQUEST's Universal Access Service, ranging from the lowest monthly plan of P350 for 10 hours to as high as P2,500 for unlimited use.

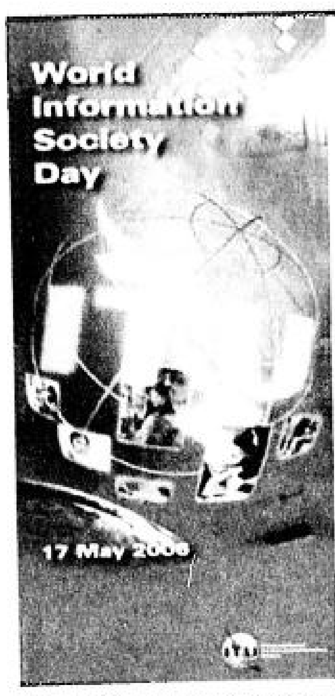
Likewise, by texting WIZ ON to 2333, Globe Handyphone postpaid subscribers can get their user IDs and password through SMS which can be used to log-in at any WIZ hotzone. WIZ usages will be charged to the subscriber's monthly bill at PhP2.00/minute. Also, GlobeQUEST has partnered with myAyala.com thereby allowing customers to purchase a GlobeQUEST WiZ account online through a credit card.

At the same time, GlobeQUEST WiZ allows Wi-Fi Roaming-in for customers of Pacific Internet, Worldpass, BOINGO Wireless, iPass, and Deutsche Telekom to access wireless broadband Internet

For more information log on to www.wiz.globequest.com.ph or call the GlobeQUEST Hotline 79-QUEST.

World Telecommunication Day

Editor **Aries Espinosa**



May 17, 2006: The FIRST ever World Information Society Day

THE WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (Geneva 2003 - Tunis 2005) has achieved a common global understanding of the key principles that will determine peoples' ability to harness the potential of ICTs. The Summit has also created a unique impetus towards a more inclusive Information Society and has set forth an Agenda for Action.

To keep up this momentum, the Summit called upon the United Nations to proclaim May 17 as World Information Society Day. A resolution to this effect was adopted by the UN General Assembly on March 27, 2006.

Celebrating the first World information Society Day, a series of events related to the implementation of the WSIS action lines will take place from May 9 to 23.

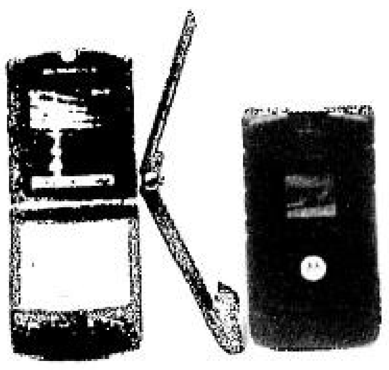
On this important occasion, ITU will present the ITU World Information Society Award to His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal and Professor Muhammad Yunus, Managing Director of the Grameen Bank, Bangladesh.

On May 17, ITU commemorates the first World Informaiton Society Day. For more than 140 years, ITU has been the global focal point in developing ICT networks and services for all the world's inhabitants. As the UN agency specializing in helping the world communicate, ITU has taken the lead in the cyberage to connect the unconnected so that everyone can benefit from the vast potential of the digital revolution.

Recognizing this evolution, the World Summit on the Information Society called upon the United Nations to declare May 17, which marks World Telecommunication Day, as World Information Society Day to raise awareness of the importance of ICT in bringing enormous possibilities to societies and economies. It also highlights a global commitment to contribute to an emerging people centered and development-oriented Information Society that aims to meet the aspirations of all humanity.

Motorola's RAZR V3x wins Best 3GSM Handset 2006

Motorola's RAZR V3x handset was recognized by the GSM Association as the 'Best 3GSM Handset 2006'. The stunning Motorola RAZR V3x was the talk of the town when it secured the most prestigious award at the association's annual awards ceremony at the 3GSM World Congress in Barcelona. With its ultra-slim clamshell form and clever integration of the design features that made the RAZR the company's most globally acclaimed product, the Motorola RAZR V3x is the ultimate in mobile entertainment devices. Delivering an impressive range of media tools, including a 2-megapixel camera, real-time two-way video calling, still and moving image capture, progressive downloading and 3D graphics this UMTS/3G handset has it all. For more information on 3GSM visit: www.motorola.com/3gsm.



Motorola's RAZR V3 wins CNET Asia Readers' Choice award

Motorola's Special Edition RAZR V3 Black was recently voted Best Looking Mobile Phone, at the CNET Asia Reader's Choice Awards. Heralding its sleek, seamless design, CNET awarded the Motorola V3 Black the Gold Seal for the Best Looking Phone Category. The bottom line according to CNET Asia? 'It's hard to go past the Motorola RAZR V3 for looks. The black version is even more stylish that its silver predecessor.'

MOTOROLA

MOTORAZR V3x

Think fast. No, think faster. The world of hi-speed data transfer is now at your fingertips. With a super-slim figure that's 3G-ready, this phone raises one critical question. Can you keep up? The new Motorola RAZR V3x. ***hellomoto.com/ph***

AWARDS WINNER
3GSM Handset of the Year Award

For more information call 1-800-1651-0415. Email us at cellphones.ph@motorola.com or visit www.hellomoto.com/ph for more details.

Messages

The National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) joins the World in celebrating World Telecommunication Day 2006 with its theme "Promoting Global Cybersecurity". The United Nation (UN), in this year's celebration, is calling for international organizations to consider measures to foster a global culture of cybersecurity and invite Member States to develop throughout their societies a culture of cybersecurity in the application and use of information technologies. The UN also stressed the necessity to facilitate the transfer of information technology and capacity-building to developing countries, in order to help them to take measures in cybersecurity. This is a positive step and very much welcomed by the NTC.

The progress and development in information and communications technology (ICT) in telecommunications services and Internet access have further intensified the pace of innovation and has transformed business models in the telecommunications industry substantially. Currently, telecommunications industries experience a new fundamental transformation which is characterized by a shift through convergence and integration towards so-called Next Generation Networks (NGN). Several networks (PSTN, Mobile, IP, Cable TV) become connected under the IP standard which allows ubiquitous access to services (both fixed and mobile), becoming however, more vulnerable to cybersecurity threats and attacks.

With the emergence of new IP based services, regulators face many difficult challenges to implement efficient use of technological resources and affordable services. Regulatory uncertainty will remain if no stable and predictable regulatory framework is developed. Hence, it is important to espouse United Nations' campaign on the global culture of cybersecurity and the protection of critical information infrastructure and enhance efforts to close the digital divide to achieve universal access to information and communication technologies and services. It is also the goal of the Commission to raise awareness in the sector and the need to defend information and communications systems against the threat of cyber attack, and continue to promote cooperation among appropriate entities in order to enhance exchange of technical information in the field of information and communication network security.

At present, the government is working on several key activities in an effort to come up with a more integrated approach to cybersecurity. One of the key initiatives is the creation of the Task Force on Security of Critical Infrastructure (TFSCI) and Government Computer Security and Incident Response Team (G-CSIRT). The task now is to prepare the National Strategy for the Protection of Critical Cyber Infrastructure and formulation and implementation of national plan.

It is our hope that through the activities lined up in the celebration of World Telecommunications Day 2006 we will be able to instill cybersecurity awareness and established a mechanism for national and international security coordination.

RONALD OLIVAR SOLIS
Commissioner
National Telecommunication Commission

Today we celebrate the very first World Information Society Day!

Traditionally, May 17 is observed every year as World Telecommunication Day, under the auspices of the United Nations and its specialized arm for telecommunications, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). However last year, in Tunisia, the World Summit on the Information Society called on the United Nations to declare that May 17 henceforth be celebrated as World Information Society Day.

I believe that this provides tacit recognition of the reality that telecommunications, information technology and their related fields are fast converging into what we now know as Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The Commission of Information and Communications Technology (CICT), the government body that has been officially designated as the ITU Administration for our country, is pleased to partner with the Philippine Electronics and Telecommunications Federation (PETEF) and the Philippine Chamber of Telecommunications Operators (PCTO) in our country's observance of WTD/WISD. We should also note that in the Philippines, we have traditionally celebrated the National Electronics and Telecommunications Week (NETW) every May 17-23.

We also wish to commend the media organizations who agreed to support the celebration of WTD/WISD under the initiative of the Publications, Media and Events Group of CD Castro Consultancy, Inc. (CDCCI).

I have often wondered, how do we bring the benefits of the Information Society to every Filipino? How do we make the value of a World Telecommunication Day more apparent and real to all Filipinos? How do we reach the unserved and underserved areas of our archipelago?

In search of answers to these questions, PETEF, PCTO, CICT and the NTC have organized a two-day conference and workshop with the theme: "MMX Digital for all Filipinos". Our goal is no less than to achieve one of President Arroyo's ten-point agenda items, which is "Digital Infrastructure for All" by the year 2010.

In closing, let me echo the global theme of WTD 2006, which is "Promoting Global Cybersecurity". The CICT reiterates its call for the appropriate data privacy and cybersecurity legislation, which will go a long way in supporting our government's thrust in promoting the "Philippine Cyberservices Corridor" as the trusted source for global services.

Thank you very much for joining us in our celebration of WTD/WISD. Mabuhay!

DAMIAN DOMINGO O. MAPA
Commissioner
Commission on Information
and Communications Technology

National Telecommunications Commission 2005 Accomplishment / Performance Report

Period Covered: January - December 2005

A. General

- eNTC Project Phase I was bidded out and awarded to joint partners GeoSpatial Solutions Inc. and Philkoei International, Inc. for a contract price amounting to PhP 15.250 Million

Scope:

- Preparation of eNTC detailed design specification requirements - Systems design and development
- NTC Web Portal
- Walk-in System for Examination (WISE)
- Document imaging/Database buildup
- Provision of hardware, software and services

- Finalized the NTC reorganization bill entitled "An Act Reorganizing the National Telecommunications Commission into the National Information and Communications Commission, Defining its Powers and Functions and Appropriating Funds Therefor and submitted the bill to Congress.
- Issued circular governing rules and regulations on the allocation and assignment of Third Generation (3G) radio frequency bands 825 - 845 MHz; 870 - 890 MHz; 1880 - 1900 MHz; 1920 - 1980 MHz; 2110 -2170 MHz; 2010 - 2025 MHz.
- Issued an Explanatory Memorandum and circular on Voice over Internet Protocol (V oIP).
- Initiated study on adopting an overall competition policy framework in both the telecoms and broadcast industries.
- Undertook public hearing and consultation on Digital FM Radio Broadcast and Low Power Radio Station.
- Created a Technical Working Group (TWG) regarding technical standards and operating guidelines for Digital Television Broadcasting
- Resolved the issue on the cablecasting of "chatroom channels" by cable operators with the issuance of guidelines made by NTC together with cable operators and stakeholders.
- Issued an Office Order entitled "New Guidelines for the Modification of CATV Application Evaluation" to address the issue of overbuilding on CATV operation.
- Issued a draft circular for the creation of an Intellectual Property Unit for the NTC which shall be tasked to monitor programs being shown by CATV operators and to determine whether the said programs are authorized to be received, distributed or transmitted by the CATV operator.
- Issued circular on Head-End Sharing/Consolidation among CATV Operators.
- Issued circular on frequency allocation and block arrangements for Fixed Wireless Access Systems in the bands 3.4 - 3.6 GHz. and 10.15 -10.65 GHz.
- Issued circular on frequency band allocations for Broadband Wireless Access for fixed, nomadic and mobile networks.
- 450 - 470 MHz; 1900 - 1910 MHz; 1980 - 1990 MHz; 2400 - 2483 MHz; 2500 - 2700 MHz; 3400 - 3600 MHz; 5150 - 5350 MHz; 5470- 5850 MHz; and 10150 - 10650 MHz.
- Issued circular on extension of the UHF TV Broadcast band.
- Conducted public hearing on the formulation of guidelines on the operation of short range devices and Radio Frequency Identification/s (RFIDs).
- Issued circular on rules and regulations on broadcast messaging service or rules against what is commonly known as "text spam"
- Hosted the 4th Joint Sectoral Committee (JSC) Meeting of ASEAN Technical Regulators' Council (ATRC) held on March 16 - 17,2005 at the Holiday Inn Galleria Manila

B. Memorandum Circulars Issued

A total of 13 Memorandum Circulars were issued in 2005.

- Memorandum Circular 08-08-2004A - Additional Rules and Regulations on the Purchase, Sale, Lease and/or Retail of Mobile Phones.
- Memorandum Circular 01-01-2005 - Schedule of Regular Radio Operator's Examination in the Regional Offices for the Year 2005.
- Memorandum Circular 02-02-2005 - Frequency Allocation and Block Arrangements for Fixed Wireless Access Systems in the Bands 3.4 - 3.6 GHz and 10.15 - 10.65 GHz.
- Memorandum Circular 03-03-2005 - Rules and Regulations on Broadcast Messaging Service.
- Memorandum Circular 04-07-2005 - Extension of the UHF TV Broadcast Band.
- Memorandum Circular 05-08-2005 - Voice over Internet Protocol (V oIP).
- Memorandum Circular 06-08-2005 - Frequency Band Allocations for Broadband Wireless Access.
- Memorandum Circular 07-08-2005 - Rules and Regulations on the Allocation and Assignment of 3G Radio Frequency Bands.
- Memorandum Circular 08-11-2005 - Reiterating Strict Compliance with Executive Order No. 255 dated July 25, 1987 (Mandatory playing of original Pilipino musical compositions in all radio stations with musical format programs).
- Memorandum Circular 09-11-2005 - Frequency Allocation for Telemetry and other Similar Data Systems.
- Memorandum Circular 10-11-2005 - Guidelines on the cablecasting of CATV channels with "chatroom" formats.
- Memorandum Circular 11-11-2005 - Guidelines for Sharing/Consolidation of Head-end Facilities of Cable Television Stations.
- Memorandum Circular 07-08-2005C - Correction to Section 6.4 and Section 7.1(a) of Memorandum Circular No. 07-08-2005

C. Additional Telecom Operators and Broadcast Stations

- Authorizations granted to 2 AM, 3 TV stations and 23 CATV Operators.
- Issued Certificates of Registration to 57 additional VAS Operators

D. Operational Accomplishments

- Issued 242,462 licenses, permits and certificates.
- Monitored 317,046 frequency channels.
- Conducted 52,290 inspections/investigations.
- 29,745 frequency assignments made.
- Disposed 274 authorization and 1,859 administrative cases

E. Total Revenue Generation

- Generated total collections amounting to PHP 2,268,805,306.97

The need for new reforms in RP telecoms

By: Cesar D. Castro
President and Principal Consultant
CD Castro Consultancy, Inc.

PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL-Arroyo in her inaugural address as the 14th President of the Republic of the Philippines outlined her vision for the country for the next six years. In her speech, she outlined the 10-point agenda of her government, one that she referred to as her 10-point Beat the Odds blueprint. This agenda will also serve as the fundamental guide for our nation's economic blueprint from this year up to the year 2010.

In her 10-point agenda, President Arroyo cited the need for "The decentralization of progress around the nation through the use of transportation networks and the digital infrastructure".

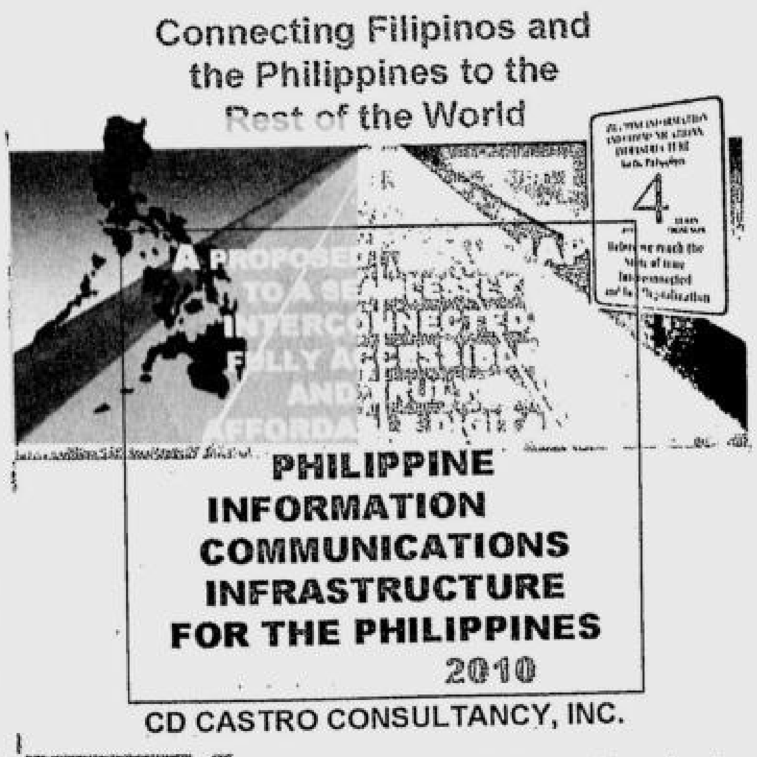
From the perspective of the private sector in the country, made up of the enterprises that either provide the information and communications services or are their main users and that of civil society, representing all the other users of information and communications services in our country, the inclusion of the term "digital infrastructure" can and should be considered as most appropriate and truly right in time.

That move has placed information and communications or what is now more popularly referred to as "ICT" in the government's official road map to development and progress.

For indeed the building of a digital infrastructure, or what we have in the past referred to as the Philippine Information Infrastructure or PII, must really an integral part of every nation's near-term as well as in both its medium and long-term development plans. President Macapagal-Arroyo has clearly indicated that her 10-point agenda will cover her term of office and will serve as the blueprint that should be able to respond to the demand for more prosperity for the greatest number of our people. One that may not eradicate poverty in our country but will be minimize its burdens upon our people and nation.

A well-planned, progressively evolving, and universally accessible national information infrastructure serves as the cornerstone of the efforts of every nation to benefit from the fast emerging Information Society. The Philippines particularly with its present conditions both from the perspective of problems and opportunities will not be an exception to this principle of development.

It is this national digital infrastructure that will move data, information, and more importantly, knowledge from one point to another in the country; will allow one person to communicate with another whether he or she may be in the Philippines or is somewhere else in the world, and will allow men to communicate with machines e.g. computers as well as machines communicate with other machines.


Connecting Filipinos and the Philippines to the Rest of the World
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PHILIPPINE INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE PHILIPPINES
2010
CD CASTRO CONSULTANCY, INC.

It is this digital infrastructure, you may want to call it the PII or by any other name, that holds the key to where in the Philippines will have more progress than another one. Thus, development must be planned to be as balanced as possible. Universal access and the provision of universal service are, therefore, two pillars of national digital infrastructure development process.

Large urban centers must have all types of broadband access while agricultural centers and smaller cities must have the kind of ICT services that are needed in that environment. Large, poverty stricken, rural areas must have similar but different type of ICT services, services that the people in those areas need. There is, therefore, an urgent need for a

TELECOM/E3

The Smart 3G experience is really going places

The SMART 3G rollout nationwide is using the same SMART commitment in giving more to the most people. Soon we'll be a 3G country, and we'll be doing things on our cell phones once only dreamt of.

The story of SMART 3G began earlier than many of us may think. It's a story of firsts.

First to Test

It was way back in January 2001 when SMART conducted trials for its first experimental 3G wireless system in the Philippines. By then it already installed base stations that were easily 3G-upgradeable.

First to Demo in an International Conference

Last year the world body GSM Association's IREG (Inter-working Roaming Expert Group) was hosted by SMART in Cebu. One of the rare times it was held outside of Europe, the event included SMART GSM and WiFi solutions and highlighted by the first media demonstration of SMART's 3G International Roaming capabilities with its partner, Telecom Italia Mobile.

First Time on TV

PLDT and SMART Chairman Manny Pangilinan's 3G demo video call to celebrity Kris Aquino on TV made us marvel at the possibility of seeing the person we're talking to, and we're just starting to understand what it all means.

First Time in Festivals

SMART 3G linked the Sinulog and Ati-atihan festivals early this year. SMART 3G gave a glimpse of it all, the sound, the color, and even the feeling of actually being there.

First in Schools

SMART 3G continues its way to our schools, with Ateneo de Manila and De la Salle Universities hosting demos on their campuses. Both faculty and students alike were learning the new promises of 3G - video calling, video streaming, and music downloads. Everything indeed is building up; and this is only the beginning.

You can look forward to even more as SMART 3G, the Real 3G, makes more demos to even more people, events, and institutions around the country. It's worthwhile to spread the word: what you've eagerly dreamt of is coming very soon.

http://www.smart.com.ph/SMART/Services/3G/Milestones.htm

Frequently Asked Questions about 3G

1. What is 3G?

3G literally means "3rd Generation". With 3G, you can enjoy video calling, high-speed, video streaming and mobile Internet six times faster than the current GSM/GPRS.

2. What services will I enjoy with 3G?

With 3G, subscribers can avail of new, cutting-edge services such as:

- Video Calling

Allows subscribers to see the called party live.

- Video Streaming

Watch videos directly from the net real-time. It's like watching TV on your phone.

- High Speed Mobile Internet Access

Surf the web at broadband speed.

- Video and Audio Download of Selected Contents

Download your favorite clips and music.

3. What handsets can support 3G?

3G capable handsets such as Nokia 6680, Nokia N70, Nokia N90 and Sony Ericsson K608. Other handsets will be available soon.

4. Can I still text, call and download while using 3G?

Yes. You may continue to use ALL other Smart services on top of the Smart 3G unique features and services.

5. How do I set-up my phone?

There are three steps to be able to access 3G:

- Step 1 Using your 3G handset

Go to Tools ? Settings ? Network Mode ? select Dual Mode

- Step 2

Activate your handset by texting Set 3G and send to 211

- Step 3

Save Settings sent by 333. Key in 1234 when prompted

To find-out if you're on 3G Service, there will be a 3G icon at the top left most Portion of your screen (for NOKIA handsets) or bubble like image (for SONY ERICSSON)

6. How can I access 3G content?

There are three (3) ways to access 3G content:

a. Go to Services Menu of your phone

Type http://wap.smart.com.ph/3G in your phone browser

b. Text SMART3G to 211

c. Go to SMART wapsite: http://wap.smart.com.ph Click on SMART 3G

7. What are the services being offered in 3G?

There are a number of services distinct to 3G. There is Video Calling, video Streaming of TV (Ex. GMA 7 and ABS-CBN) Music, Movies and Internet Browsing at broadband speed.

8. How do I video call?

a. Enter the desired number of choose from your phonebook

b. Click on Options and select Video Call (for Nokia) or Press One Touch Acces (for Sony Ericsson) and wait for your video call connection.

9. How do I video stream?

a. Go to wap.smart.com.ph/3G on your phone's browser.

b. Click on the link of the content you want to view.

c. To end session, go to options and select exit.

10. How do I browse the internet?

a. Go to your phone's web browser, Web (for Nokia) or Internet services (for Sony Ericsson)

b. Select a site from your bookmarks or enter directly the web address of the site you want to visit or select More (for Sony Ericsson). You will soon be connected to the Internet.

c. To end browsing session, go to options and select exit.

11. What sites can I access on my mobile phone?

You can visit wap.yahoo.com, www.google.com, mobile.msn.com/wml/ for search and e-mail Needs and www.abs-cbn.com, www.igma.tv for streaming content.

For other sites, check-out the SMART Wapsite at wap.smart.com.ph to see other links.

The need for new reforms in RP telecoms

From page E2

well planned development strategy and scheme.

For example, in the urban centers, broadband access to the Internet is critical to the growth of the area as well as its ability to compete for certain investment opportunities including those that attract foreign investments. In this environment, the quality of the services provided and the confidence, integrity and security of the networks may be the most critical aspects.

On the other hand, in the rural areas, all that may be needed, at a certain time or period, may just be a number of the so-called "Community eCenters" or CeC. What is critical in this rural environment is the ability to access the Internet at a reasonable speed and at an affordable cost.

It is a fact that whatever growth our nation's economy is showing can be attributed mainly to recent progress made in telecommunications more specifically in the unprecedented increase (or should we describe it as an "explosion"?) in the number of mobile telephone subscribers in our country. It must also be recognized that the influx of call centers and the advent of the relatively new field of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) in the Philippines. Call centers, BPOs and other ICT-driven enterprises are major users of the so-called "digital infrastructure".

The future of the nation's competitiveness in the global markets also relies mainly on the availability of information and communications services, their adequacy and the quality of these services and their costs.

It may even be argued that it is not only the decentralization of progress but, in fact, the progress of the nation and the well-being of its people that are truly dependent on whether the Philippines has available, adequate, and affordable information and communications services in almost the all of the nation whether the area is urban or rural, progressive or not.

The need for a 'Digital Infrastructure'

Filipinos must be connected with one another as well as with others in the world and the Philippines must be connected to the rest of the world by its own digital ICT infrastructure.

What the Philippines, an island-nation of more than 7,000 islands, urgently needs now are adequate information and communications (or "ICT) services that will allow Filipinos as well as foreigners residing in the country who are, at any point in time, in the Philippines to communicate with one another as well as communicate with others who are located in other countries. The fact is that millions of Filipinos are working abroad as workers or professionals and this alone makes communications a critically required service that is so vital and critical needed by each and every Filipino.

Beyond the traditional communications services i.e. telephone, facsimile, etc. the country also requires an adequate system of transporting data and information transport or data communications.

Today, the Internet is most popular and while not all Filipinos can or have even just it for just once in their lifetime, it is most popular on a nationwide basis. The logical goal is, therefore, is for every Filipino to have right now, or soon, or even just, ultimately, access to the Internet. This will be wherever he or she may be located, at any given time, and at costs that are not only reasonable but, more importantly, affordable. The costs involved in availing information and communications services should be low enough so that even to the most challenged and unprivileged, the poor Filipinos, wherever they may be, and whether they are in the urban centers of the country or in its rural areas can make use of these services.

In more simple terms, what the Filipinos urgently need today is the ability to be connected to one another i.e. a member of the family, a friend or for business whether he or she is in the Philippines or abroad, anytime, anywhere, and at costs that are not only reasonable but are affordable.

Every Filipino, regardless of his or her economic standing in life or social classification in the community, must have the equal opportunity to fully benefit from almost if not all of the good things that an Information Society can and is expected to deliver to a nation and its people.

It must, however, be recognized though that the true state of the digital infrastructure, i.e. what kind of services it can provide, where these services can be availed of, and at what charges that a Filipino will have to pay for, determines to a large extent how its citi-

TELECOM/ F2

SIEMENS

Global network of innovation

SIEMENS IS THE MARKET LEADER IN 3G RAN

IN THEIR LATEST STUDY, THE market researchers at the MultiMedia Research Institute affirm Siemens/NEC's no. 1 market position in the field of 3G/WCDMA: over 30 percent of 3G base stations (NodeBs) used commercially worldwide by mobile providers are from Siemens and NEC (source: Worldwide W-CDMA Cellular Base Station Market Report, Tokyo 2005). On top of this success, Siemens and NEC will continue their 3G success story and partnership in the years to come.

"The top position in the 3G market is the best evidence of the success of our partnership with NEC. The joint team is doing and excellent work", said Cristoph Caselitz, President of Mobile Networks at Siemens Communications. "90 percent of all 3G mobile customers worldwide are already using W-CDMA-based technology from Siemens and NEC."

The partnership between Siemens and NEC began over 5 years ago. In November 1999, both companies founded a joint venture to jointly develop and produce infrastructure technology for third generation mobile communication. Siemens and NEC have collaboratively and successfully established global supply chain management and structure. The companies started supplying their first 3G Node Bs outside Japan in December 2001 and supplied the first commercial service of Hutchison 3G group in the UK and Italy.

Both companies have also greatly contributed to Node B standardization activity in the "Common Public Radio Interface (CPRI)", and introduced the world's first CPRI-compliant Node B "NB-88x" series in November 2004.

"By combining our experience and expertise in the field of 3G five years ago, we were able to develop, produce, and market the new technology much more efficiently right from the start, including a HSDPA (High Speed Downlink Packet Access) end-to-end solution, one of the first to be available on the market. This gives us clear advantages as far as market entry and maturity are concerned", said Takakuni Kuki, Executive General Manager of Mobile Network Operations Unit at NEC.

Against this background, Siemens and NEC are now embarking on the next major steps: the extension of their 3G/WCDMA/HSDPA solution towards HSUPA(High Speed Uplink Packet Access). Furthermore, the partners are joining forces to push the long-term evolution of 3G in the respective international bodies.

Siemens Communications is one of the largest players in the global telecommunications industry. Siemens is the only provider in the market that offers its customers a full-range portfolio, from devices for end users to complex network infrastructures for enterprise and carriers as well as related services. Siemens Communications is the world's innovation leader in convergent technologies, products and services for wireless, fixed and enterprise networks. It is the largest Group within Siemens and operates in more than 160 countries around the world. In fiscal 2004 (year-end September 30), its 60,000-strong workforce posted sales of approximately 18 billion euros.

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3G with HSDPA: First in Asia-Pacific, a first from Globe Telecom!

FOLLOWING ITS SUCCESSFUL ROLLOUT OF 3G services including HSDPA or "3.5G", Globe Telecom is now the first telecom company in the Asia-Pacific region and among less than 20 in the world to have launched HSDPA/3.5 G capabilities to customers. This technology boosts the functionality of 3G by allowing faster data transfer speeds and Internet browsing, while still letting subscribers enjoy basic 3G services such as video calls and video streaming. With its launch of Globe Mobile Broadband 3G with HSDPA, Globe is now building the network of the future.

Hi-speed mobile Internet

HSDPA (High Speed Downlink Packet Access, commonly referred to as "3.5G") enables data transfer rates of up to 1.4 Megabits per second (Mbps) with peaks of up to 1.8 Mbps - rather than the previous 384 kilobits for 3G. With an HSDPA-data card for example, browsing the Internet on your laptop will be up to 25 times faster than dial-up Internet access. Mobile customers can now use their notebook or mobile phone to surf the Internet at broadband speeds and download large volumes of data such as movies or large e-mail attachments faster than before.

HSDPA technology lays the groundwork for the network of the future as it upgrades the capabilities of 3G. The launch of Globe Mobile Broadband 3G with HSDPA already anticipates that subscribers will demand greater functionality from 3G as the service becomes more pervasive and accessible.

Enhanced mobile experience

With the rapid connection speeds that it delivers, Globe Mobile Broadband 3G with HSDPA opens up a lot of potential for new applications. Users can easily download full-length music tracks or large video files, and experience video streaming or mobile TV. They can also access exclusive content from various partners, including news reports from ABS-CBN, CNN and GMA.

In addition, Globe prepaid and postpaid subscribers can also avail of 3G basic services such as video calling (which allows the calling parties to see each other on their 3G mobile phones), video sharing (which lets users capture and send video clips to each other), and multimedia streaming.

Limitless possibilities

Subscribers who tried out the Globe Mobile Broadband 3G service when it was introduced earlier this year have already expressed enthusiastic feedback on the rapid web browsing speeds that it enables. Allen Bacallan, director for management information systems of General Milling Corp, shares: "I used my 3G phone as a laptop modem in business meetings. My friends and business partners were impressed by the connection speed." PruLife UK's vice president for information systems Brett Medel agrees: "3G gives me the freedom to download technical updates, check my e-mail, or even watch TV while on the go. Busy people appreciate having services like these that enrich both their professional and personal lives." Even showbiz personality Donita Rose was excited by the potential of the technology. "It's even better than having a broadband connection because you can access information anytime, anywhere," she says.

With the advent of Globe Mobile Broadband 3G with HSDPA, the possibilities have expanded even more. Globe expects a similarly eager reception from Pinoys, much like the response to the company's earlier innovations like text messaging. MMS over-the-air reloading, and mobile commerce.

The future for real

From SMS to MMS and even mobile commerce, Filipinos have easily and eagerly embraced new developments in communications technology brought about by Globe's pioneering moves.

Through Globe Mobile Broadband 3G with HSDPA, Filipinos have the unique privilege of being the first in Asia-Pacific to try out the exciting possibilities of this new technology. Among other telcos in the region, several are also looking into rolling out HSDPA, such as Japan's NTT DoCoMo and Hong Kong's CSL. Apart from Cingular Wireless in the USA and Wataniya Telecom in Kuwait, most HSDPA networks that are already in service are located in Europe. At least 70 other mobile providers worldwide are in the testing or deployment stages, proving the global promise of this revolutionary technology.

Globe subscribers can now experience Globe Mobile Broadband 3G with HSDPA at regular 2G rates. Demos are available at selected Globe Business Centers in Metro Manila. The service is available in key cities nationwide, and Globe is continually working to expand its coverage to bring this new service to more Filipinos all over the country and even worldwide.

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The need for new reforms in RP telecoms

From page E3

zens, in the case of the Philippines, Filipinos, as well as other residents of the country can avail of the benefits of the Information Society. In fact, the nation may not even be able to bring these benefits to its people in view of the inadequacy, the non-availability and/or the un-affordability of these services.

Defining digital infrastructure

There appears to be a need to first define and understand, clearly and correctly, what the President refers to as "digital infrastructure". The term "digital" is by its definition may be too broad to fully comprehend and to explain its real meaning. Yet, most would assume that they understand what it means considering the popularity of the word and the frequency of its use. Almost everything around us now is based on digital technology. Most of what is still based on the old analog technology can now be converted to digital.

Infrastructure, on the other hand, is simply defined as the most fundamental or the core of any system of structures.

The Information Society is said to be the successor to the Industrial Society due to the importance of information to almost every person, community and nation today. Information is similar to but is different from Knowledge which is defined as information that has purpose or use. The metaphors associated with the terms information, knowledge, information society and knowledge society are often more confusing than helpful.

Digital, is more simple terms, what the Filipinos urgently need today is the ability to be connected to one another i.e. a member of the family, a friend or for business whether he or she is in the Philippines or abroad, anytime, anywhere, and at costs that are not only reasonable but are affordable.

PII as the digital infrastructure

At the foundation of this new world order are the digital information networks of the different nations of the world that when interconnected forms what many simply refer to as the "internet", others as the "global information superhighway", or still others, as the Global Information Infrastructure or GII. The global "network of networks" is, therefore, composed of what is referred to as the "National Information Infrastructure" or the NII of a particular nation. When it interconnects with another and with more NIIs, they they become part of the GII.

This is what President Macapagal-Arroyo must be referring to as our nation's digital infrastructure.

In 1998, before the end of the term of former Philippine President Fidel V. Ramos, the late Transport and Communications Secretary Arturo Enrile, upon the recommendation of then Undersecretary Josefina Trinidad-Lichauco, authorized the development of what was then termed as the Philippine Information Infrastructure (PII) Policy Study or the "PII PS". The result of this study, undertaken by Canadian and Filipino experts and consultants was supposed to be the PII Policy Development Plan, one that will basically consist of an Agenda and an Action Plan.

The work on the PII was successfully completed in 1999 but, with the coming in of a new administration, one led by the former Philippine President Joseph Ejercito Estrada, new directions were immediately taken. What is interesting is that during the Estrada administration, one of the few government officials who have openly supported move to progress the PII and advocated for its continued work was the then Vice President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The PII PS reports as prepared and submitted to the DOTC by the Canadian experts and their Filipino counterparts have been set aside and another set of directions apparently will have to be followed.

Yet, it is clear that principles and the vision and mission as defined in the PII Report of the Filipino consultants to the project are still as relevant now as they were in the late nineties and the early twenties

As we now look beyond 2004 and set our sights on 2010, it is clear that we, as a nation and a people, must continue to aspire to complete the building of our own digital infrastructure whether we will call it our National Information Infrastructure or the PII or what ever new term that may be selected by those in government now.

Now, the more popular term in use is "Information and Communication Technology" or "ICT". The PII is, therefore, now may even be referred to as our "ICT Infrastructure"

The recent efforts of the United Nations and its agency, the International Telecommunication Union or ITU revolves mainly around the work of ITU's World Summit on the Information Society or the WISP.

The WISP's Plan of Action, as declared in Geneva in the year 2003, refers to the information and communications infrastructure as the essential foundation for the Information Society. In this paper, the information and communications infrastructure is described as being central in the achievement of the goals of digital inclusion, enabling universal, sustainable, ubiquitous and affordable access to ICT services by all citizens of a nation. The WISPs advises developing nations to take into account relevant solutions already in other developing countries and countries with economies in transition in order that they can be successful in their respective efforts to provide sustainable connectivity and access to remote and marginalized areas at national and regional levels.

The WISP Plan of Action further asks governments to "take action, in the framework of their national development policies, in order to support an enabling and competitive environment for the necessary investment in ICYT infrastructure and for the development of new services." It also advices governments to devise, within the context of their existing national e-strategies, appropriate universal access policies and strategies and implement them in line with the indicative targets, and develop ICT connectivity indicators.

One of principles enunciated by the WISP in its Plan of Action is for governments to optimized connectivity among major information networks by encouraging the creation and development of ICT backbones and Internet exchange points to reduce interconnection costs and broaden network access.

The PII is the Philippines' national information infrastructure. Future integrated communications in the Philippines. The PII will be based on a nationwide "network of networks", and will allow all Filipinos as well as all residents of the Philippines to take advantage of the country's information, communications, and computing resources. The NII covers and will cover both current and future public and private high-speed, interactive, narrow-band and broadband networks. Communications systems may be based on satellite, terrestrial, and wireless technologies that can and will deliver content and applications to homes, businesses, and other government/public and private institutions. It is the data, information and all other forms of content that flows/travels/moves over the infrastructure whether in the form of databases, the written word, a film, a piece of music, a sound recording, a picture, or computer software. It is the computers, televisions, telephones, radios, and other products that people will employ to access the infrastructure. It is the people who will provide, manage, and generate new information, and those that will help others do the same. It is the individual Filipino who will use and who must benefit from the PII. The PII is a term that encompasses all these components and captures the vision of a nationwide, invisible, seamless, dynamic web of transmission mechanisms, information appliances, content, and people.

Where we are now

We now have digital infrastructure in the Philippines. The building of this infrastructure is work in progress. This infrastructure is now being built and, in fact, now being operated by the franchised and licensed public telecommunications entities. Major telecoms carriers in the Philippines are PLDT and Smart, Globe Telecom and Innove, Bayantel through its Teliphil and Digitel all have high capacity digital infrastructures utilizing mainly fiber optic, radio microwave and in some remote cases satellite for their transmission. Still mainly on the TDM,

The next move is now towards the new or next generation networks (NGN) and this will require a new wave of capital investments that only the major carriers can afford unless new capital are infused in the minor players.

Promoting investments

The government should continue its present efforts to promote investmUIents particularly from the private sector in order that the development of the physical information and communications networks (the ICT networks) that make up the nation's digital infrastructure, the "network of networks", will have to be both accelerated and rationalized.

The medium-term goal is for the Philippines, with its more than 7,000 islands, with the progressive development of its digital infrastructure to be fully interconnected and for its people to have connectivity with one another.

Every Filipino must have access to all types of ICT services including high speed/broadband connectivity to the Internet at reasonable and affordable cost that he or she may need as part of his or her daily life. If such type of connectivity is not yet available in a community, the Filipino must, at the least, have access to the Internet at reasonable speeds and at relatively low rates that he or she can afford.

> We now have digital infrastructure in the Philippines. The building of this infrastructure is work in progress. This infrastructure is now being built and, in fact, now being operated by the franchised and licensed public telecommunications entities

The government must continue to work closely and in real partnership with the private sector in order that telecommunications facilities and other resources including but not limited to cellular mobile telephony cell sites so that the telecoms carriers will be able to provide adequately serve the entire country with ICT services that Filipinos need.

The contact/call center, BPO and other ICT enable business as well as the private business e-commerce initiatives that are now gaining momentum and bringing the nation economic benefits require the accelerated and rational development of the digital infrastructure.

The government must also ensure that the interconnectivity and the interoperability requirements of the major ICT projects of government will also be fully supported by the nation's digital infrastructure.

The newly-created Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) should not be merely advisory in nature. It is critical that the law converting it into a Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) be passed in the soonest possible time. The CICT/DICT should be the primary policy, planning, coordinating, implementing, regulating and administrative entity of the Executive Branch on ICT and its e-commerce and ep-government initiatives.

The CICT/DICT should take the leadership role in ensure the achievement of our vision of a truly interconnected, ICT-enabled Philippines; a nation and people truly capable of participating and competing in and contributing to the global economy.

An integral part of the legislative measure that will create the DICT out of the CICT is the institutional strengthening of what is now known as the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) and making it a truly independent regulatory body for ICT in the Philippines. An entirely new law may, however, be needed for the purpose of really strengthening the NTC.

The reorganized and strengthened NTC should, in turn, take the lead in ensuring that new ICT services such as IP Telephony/VoIP as well as others particularly those based on new emerging technologies are provided adequately in our country. Issues on competition and on the rights of existing as well new players in a liberalized regulatory environment should be addressed and resolved on a timely basis with the goal of ensuring the availability of ICT services that our people need and also in order that the cost of communications and of moving information/knowledge from one point of the country to another as well as to and from abroad will be significantly reduced. This should bring immense economic as well as personal benefits to overseas Filipino workers and their families

The Next Steps

The next steps should start with a redefinition of the respective Roles of Government, the Private Sector and the Civil Society in the development of our nation's "Digital infrastructure", or the Philippines Information and Communications Infrastructure, our digital highway of highways or network of networks.

There should be no change in the present system where the private sector is the engine for development. Investments come from the private sector carriers only.

The government should not invest in digital infrastructure and, in fact, even investments in projects which will be privatized later should not be allowed.

Government should focus on the areas where the private sector does not go or will not go simply because the economy of the area is just not adequate to support the new facilities built. It should go only if there are takers at all. Given the lack of government capital to lend to these entrepreneurs among our countrymen, it is proposed that a new system of working with the private sector, possibly not the major carriers, but others, will be made possible.

Some kind of a new and more commercial, definitely, more creating way of doing "business franchising" should be developed.

This and the other next steps are going to be focus issues in our next paper as we continue to advocate the need for a new wave of telecoms reforms and for the crafting of a new road map towards the immediate goal of crafting a new Road Map, considering the more recent changes in technology and in almost other aspects of our lives. This road map must lead us all to a seamlessly interconnected, universally and fully accessible even from remote areas of our country and driven by truly digital new generation networks and systems. We cannot afford to be left behind any further as even now we are already seriously lagging behind communications networks and all the associated software, hardware, middleware and all other computing resources that support interaction and communications among the citizens and residents of the nation and among its societies, communities and organizations whether their orientation is business, civil society or government.

A company all Filipinos can be truly proud of: Globe Telecom

'In all that we do, Globe Telecom has always been about giving Filipinos what they want and providing what they need'

In just one sentence, Globe Telecom's president and CEO, Gerardo C Ablaza Jr., was able to sum up the corporate philosophy of a highly successful, so well admired, and highly respected telecommunications/ICT major enterprise. A company all Filipinos can be truly proud of: Globe Telecom.

Ablaza says that Globe Telecom as a corporate entity wrote its first vision, mission and values (VMV) statement anchored on the proposition that it will provide more just lines but solutions to customers' communications-based needs. Since that time, Globe has come into its own as a force that not long provides communications solutions but breakthrough services that change the way people do things.

Last year, 2005, Globe defined for itself a new VMV statement that reflects this mission to transform and enrich people's lives through communications and its vision to make great thighs possible for every Filipino. This new statement cascaded through the organization has now has reinvigorated the company's competitive spirit, serving as is its battle cry as the company ventures into exciting new territories while continuing to build on past successes. Their new battle cry now is: Sa Globe, Posible.

With a deeper customer understanding, a clearly defined strategies, and an organization that shares a passion for excellence and continuous growth Globe Telecom is one that is moving ahead with full confidence in its own resources particularly its own people. Globe is fully confident that in the years ahead it will be able to successfully harness innovations in communication technology to provide more relevant products and services that are able to transform and enrich peoples' lives.

SHOWN are: Jaime Augusto Zobel de Ayala II, chairman of the board; Lim Chuan Poh, co-vice chairman; Delfin Lazaro, co-vice chairman.

Basta Globe, Posibl

iTeach iCare shows employee volunteerism at its best

Innove Communications Inc joined the recent gathering of service providers of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), where one of the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects - iTeach iCare - was put on exhibit.

iTeach iCare, which stands for information technology and Innove Communications, involves employees of the company taking time out from work to teach public high school students various computer applications as well as the importance of the Internet to access valuable information.

Launched in September last year, iTeach iCare is being implemented in public high schools where Innove also provided Internet connectivity, in keeping with the company's thrust of helping in the development of the Filipino youth through ICT education.

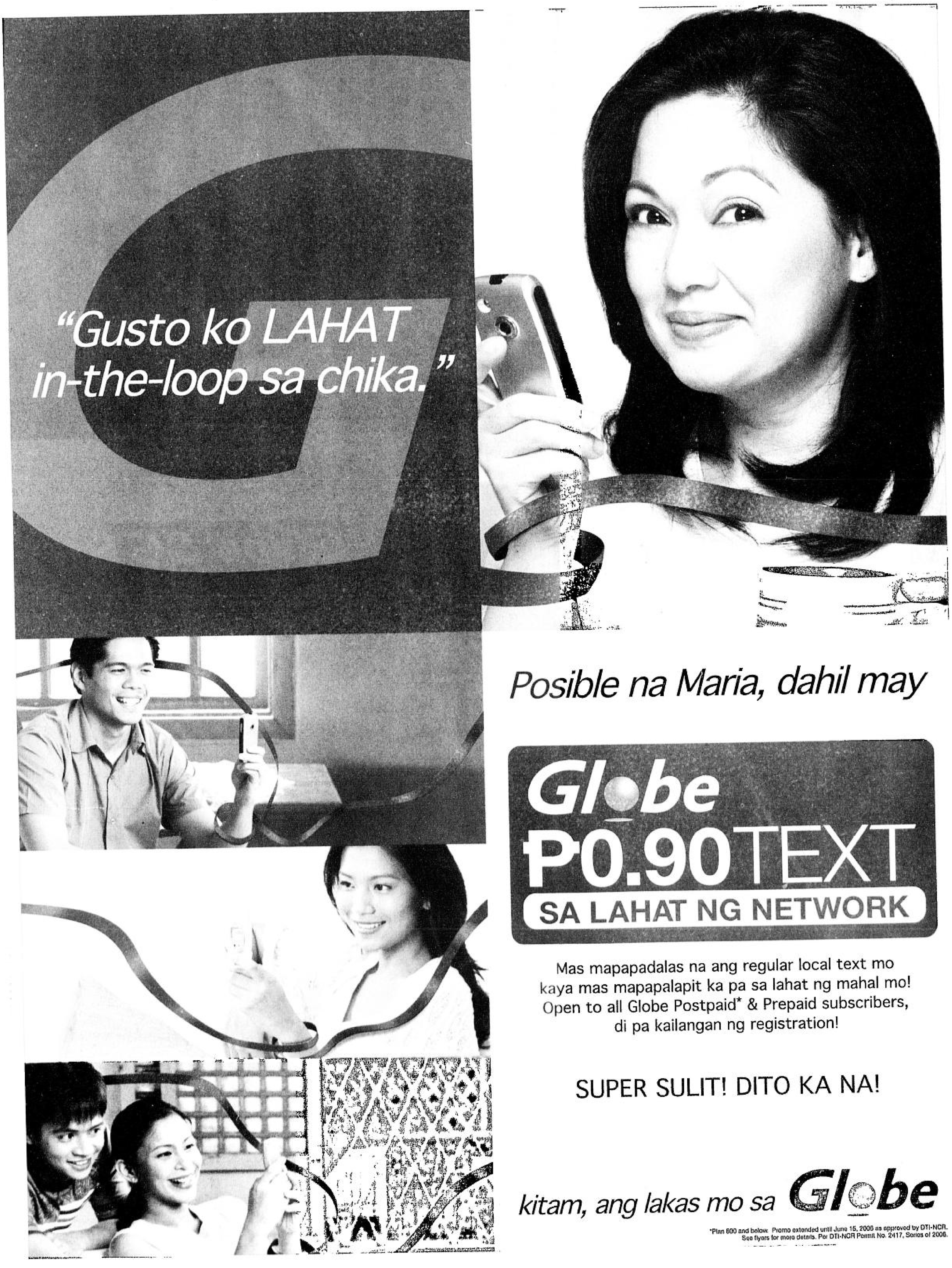
iTeach iCare not only benefits the students but also the employee volunteers of Innove as they go about sharing their knowledge and skills to the students and participating in the company's CSR programs with enthusiasm and a sense of achievement and pride.

The event, led by ADB's Office of Administration Services (OAS) and themed 'OAS and Its Service Providers: Towards A Socially Responsible Partnership', brought together the institution's service providers to demonstrate the various efforts being done by private companies in the development of the Philippines.

Aside from Innove and its iTeach iCare program, also exhibited were the CSR projects of Figaro Foundation Corp., Hewlett-Packard Philippines, HMR Philippines, Eastern Telecom, TNT, and First Balfor, Inc.

ADB, based in Manila, is dedicated to reducing poverty in the Asia and Pacific region through pro-poor sustainable economic growth, social development, and good governance. Established in 1966, it is owned by 64 members - 46 from the region. In 2004, it approved loans and technical assistance totaling $5.3 billion and $196.6 million, respectively.

SHOWN are (from left): Carlo Estonina of GlobeQUEST Sales, ADB Office of Administrative Services Principal Director Robert Dawson and Innove Corporate Social Responsibility OIC Allan Cuevas.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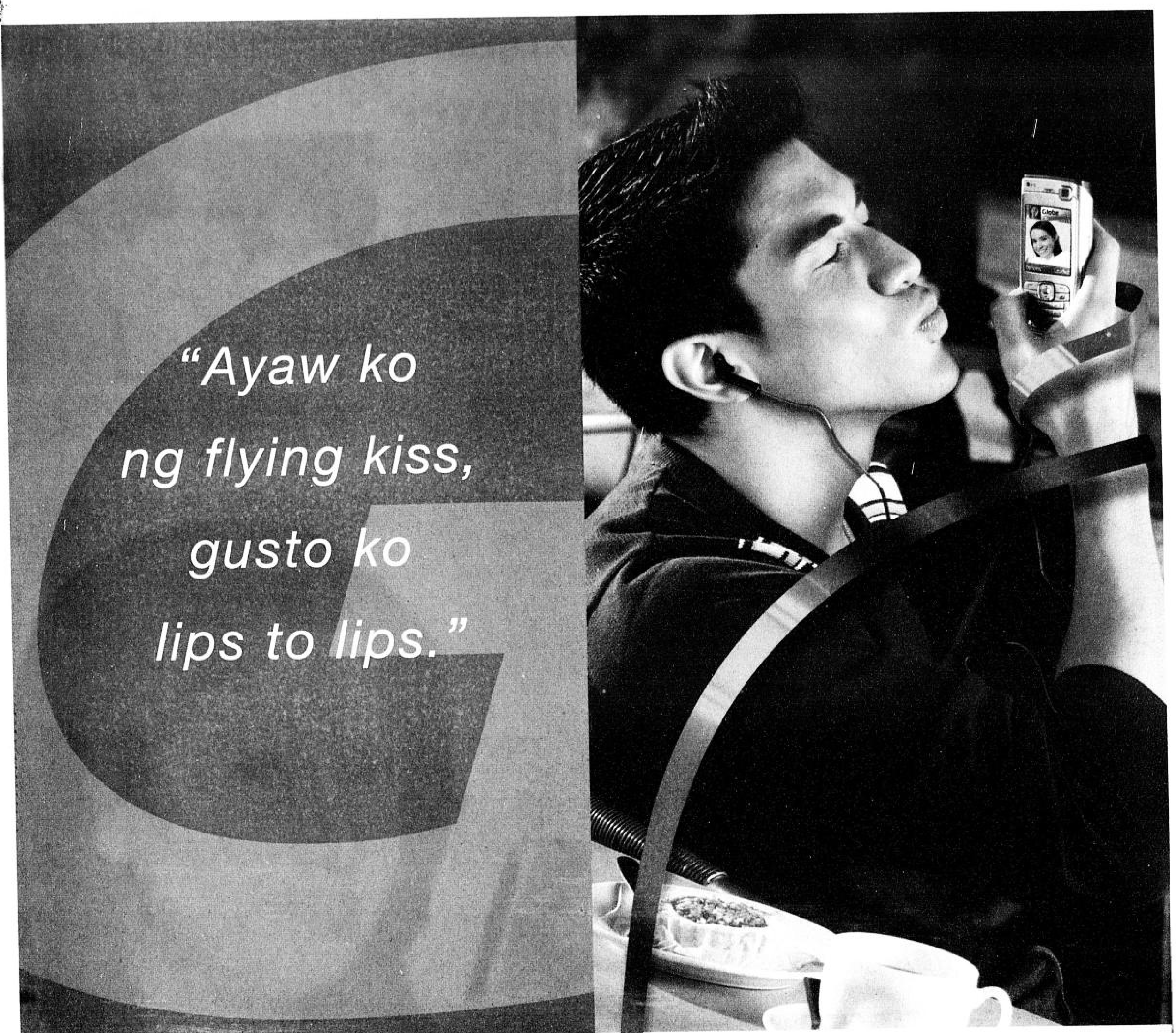

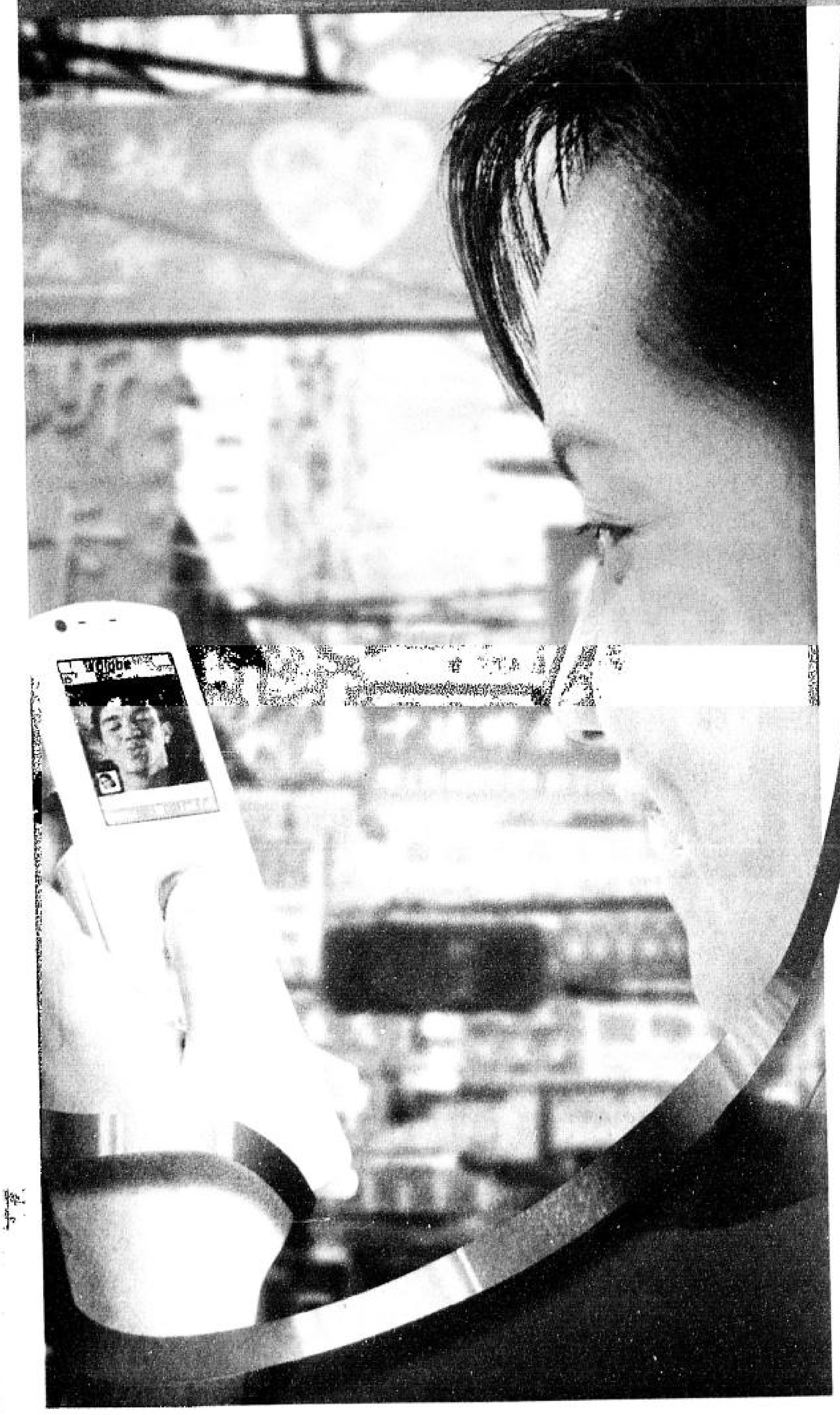

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